

DEFIBRILLATION OF PEACE: A CHRISTIAN CLERGY'S
APPROACH TOWARDS THE RESTORATION OF PEACE
IN THE NIGERIAN INTERFAITH COMMUNITY

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In Partial Fulfillment

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Doctor of Ministry

by

Isaiah Ekundayo Dada

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This professional project, completed by

Isaiah Ekundayo Dada

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Faculty Committee:

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Chairperson
Helene Slessarev-Jamir

Dean: Susan L. Nelson

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ABSTRACT

Defibrillation of Peace: A Christian Clergy's Approach towards the Restoration of Peace in the Nigerian Interfaith Community

by

Isaiah Ekundayo Dada

Peace has been a major factor of economical, political, emotional and social development, but when communal identities, particularly religious identities, are key causal factors in violent conflict in an underdeveloped, illiterate and poor Nigerian community there is need for each faith tradition to stop the unnecessary violence, and not to allow religion to be the root of it. This project explores how to empower pastors to live in peace with others and proposes nine healthy practices and a year-long curriculum outline for in-depth understanding and assimilation of peace education designed for children in Sunday school, youth in Bible Study, and adults in women's/men's fellowship groups.

The project comprises nine chapters and uses library research, including reviews of published studies, books and articles written from the perspective of peace education, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. The first chapter introduces and delineates the nature and scope of the project. The second chapter provides an overview of the history of Nigeria, describes the current state of violent conflict, and the causes of the conflict. The third chapter highlights the positive and the negative role of religion in Nigeria, defines peace and describes the understanding of peace according to each religion. The fourth chapter identifies teachings that will need to be deconstructed in the major religions that can serve the community to create a dialogue of *shalom*, *salam* or of peace. The fifth chapter offers the proper way to foster peace through *Shalom* and provides the meaning of reconciliation along with adequate steps toward reconciliation. The sixth

chapter focuses on designing an effective curriculum for congregations in order to facilitate teaching peace education. The seventh chapter offers various healthy practices for peace in the Nigerian interfaith community that will reduce violence, teach people to live in peace, and offer the healing power of love as a remedy. The eighth chapter reports the input of pastors in the U.S.A. and analyzes their feedback for the implementation of the curriculum and religious practices in Nigeria. And the ninth chapter sums up the necessity of faith needs of a defibrillator of peace that will cause a major transformation in the nature of religious conflict in Nigeria.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTON

Statement of the Problem

The problem addressed by this project is how Christian clergy can work to bring Christianity and Islamic faith traditions together while living in a context of violence, poverty and illiteracy, to achieve peace.

Importance of the Problem

I was born where there were severe tensions between Christians and Muslims. Suspicion and fear has built up between these religious communities, leading to conflict and occasional violence. In Kilore,¹ in the name of God, people were led to experience unhealthy fear, false guilt, toxic shame, and destructive anger. It was a place where, in the name of God, certain religious beliefs were inculcated that resulted in separation and hostility. The zeal with which people acted on their beliefs seems to suggest that they were suffering from religious addiction, and at that point God had become a drug. In my own Christian faith community, I learned and accepted that Muslims were unfaithful devils. I was taught that their practices were incorrect. I also learned that their God was no god. They were serving the devil, and not God. In the same way, some Muslim leaders indoctrinated their followers to believe that Christians were infidels and that to kill infidels would result in a reward in heaven. There were rules from both sides that kept people from engaging positively with one another. For example, as children we were told not to play or eat with Muslim children, or visit their homes. We were devils to each other, and to engage with each other was to pollute each other. These were unquestioned

¹ The actual name is not given for security reasons.

doctrines on both sides. They became the biases about each other that were ingrained in us. We saw each other through lenses and doctrines that engendered fear.

I have made a good Muslim friend in graduate school, and that friendship has changed my ingrained notions about Muslims. I realized that engagement brings the power to overcome such fear and to inquire of God as in 1 John 4: 8, “Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love.”² 1 John 4:18 also reminds me that “there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.” The knowledge of God is relational, and it comes through loving one’s neighbor. My personal engagement with Muslims challenges me to go beyond my own biases. My own Christian faith practice has been challenged by their practices; this has led me to greater openness to everybody, and to assist where there is need.

Also, as a pastor, I have noticed that religion has remained a largely divisive part of the politics of regions and ethnic groups in Nigeria. The Bible and the Qur'an have become a staple in a “divide and conquer” strategy in the geopolitics of the country of almost 140 million largely energetic citizens. As a nation, we have been affected by the same history. This story is influencing us and the future of our children. In Nigeria, 66% of the population falls below the poverty line of \$1 a day. This puts us among the 20 poorest countries in the world. The illiteracy rate varies according to region and environmental setting. Overall, the female illiteracy percentage is 44 per cent while in the general population, adult illiteracy is at about 36 per cent.³ In addition, the deplorable

² All Scripture references are to New Revised Standard Version.

³ Abiola Odejide, “Gender Equity in Commonwealth Higher Education: Emerging Themes in Nigeria, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania and Uganda” [online]; accessed 14 Aug . 2007; available from http://www.col.org/pcf3/Papers/PDFs/Gunawardena_Chandra_etal.pdf.

economic conditions in Nigeria are due to economic policies that are only based on the oil industry, resulting in a gross neglect of agriculture and other forms of development that could benefit the people. The young people experience high levels of unemployment, and are at risk of joining violent gangs.

The violence in most Nigerian communities takes many different forms: between children on the streets, at school, in family life and in the community. There is physical violence, psychological violence, socio-economic violence, environmental violence and political violence. Too many children live in a culture of violence. I see a frightening picture of the destructive consequences of human violence. At least 15,000 people have died in religious or ethnic fighting since 1999, and tens of thousands have fled their homes in Nigeria. As a pastor working in a community of religious diversity, I believe only peace allows for the development of nations, the flourishing of communities, and the actualization of individual dreams. Therefore, peace must be urgently restored in Nigeria.

Thesis

This project undertakes to design a curriculum based on the theology of *shalom*, which introduces religious practices in the Nigerian interfaith community context and seeks to reduce violence, teach people to live in peace, and offer the healing power of love as a remedy.

Definitions of Terms

Defibrillation refers to the termination of fibrillation of the heart muscle and restoration of normal heart rhythm, especially by one or more electric shocks administered by paddles applied to the chest. In this context, I will define defibrillation as a process to revive, to jump-start, a restoration of peace.

Work Previously Done in the Field

The existing literature in the field of ethics has helped to determine various religious practices that deal with issues of peace. An important work is *Just Peacemaking: Ten Practices of Abolishing War* by Glen Harold Stassen and others. In my search for effective healthy practices that may be applied to the Nigerian interfaith community, I found this work to be helpful. It names the practices and practical steps toward developing principles of a new critical approach to peacemaking. Rather than focusing on the question of how to stop war, Stassen and colleagues promote the theme of “fanning the flames of peace.” They challenge pacifists to be active peacemakers rather than trying to collect converts to pacifism. They also force “just war” theorists to emphasize the steps to take before the last resort of violence, thus increasing the climate of peace. And advocates for nonviolent direct action as “a strategy that lances the festering boil of violence and produces healing without resort to war.”⁴

I will not totally adopt “the Ten Practices of Abolishing War,” because I think peace cannot really be achieved in Nigeria using the entire Stassen, model. Christians

⁴John Cartwright, “Support Nonviolent Direct Action,” in “Introduction: Just Peacemaking as a New Ethic,” in *Just Peacemaking: The Ten Practices for Abolishing War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 31.

must not simply justify or oppose war, but should rather be engaged in the process of removing the contributing causes of war: injustice, intolerance, and poverty. Nigerian Christians cannot accomplish this task alone. Even if Stassen et al. advocate that “each person can base these practices on his or her own faith”⁵ Muslims will not agree to use such a model purely based on Christian principles.

In addition, Walter Wink in *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way*, argues that evil cannot be effectively countered by violence.⁶ He suggests that nonviolence is a reasonable alternative to dependence upon force. This teaching was never intended to imply that people should do nothing in the face of violence, but to humiliate those who hurt Christians, and to win them over. Reading *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* has empowered me to make changes in my life, and to discover the need for peace education in the Christian Nigerian context. However, Wink fails to talk about what to do when you love your enemies, and their aim is to exterminate you based on their religious belief. Will one continue to turn his/ her cheek? He does not address religious violence. He mentions terrorism, and he does so only vaguely in the context of nonviolent reaction; namely, not striking back with physical force. The concept of to turn the other cheek already has been used for violence by some Nigerian Christians. This model for peace will not be effective in Nigeria.

Furthermore, literature in the field of religious education is of great help in my

⁵ Duane K. Friesen, John Langan and Glen Stassen, “Introduction: Just Peacemaking as a New Ethic,” *Just Peacemaking: The Ten Practices of Abolishing War*, ed. Glen Stassen (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1998), 5.

⁶ Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 9.

transformative pedagogy and in the designing of the curriculum. In *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*, Maria Harris describes the different elements of the Church that need to be included when designing a curriculum. She analyzes current educational curricula and challenges congregations to understand those elements in order to be changed. She brings this into the forefront with discussion of such practices as *kerygma* (proclamation), *didache* (instruction/teaching), *leiturgia* (worship/prayer), *koinonia* (community), and *diakonia* (service) within the practices of today.⁷ She further allows us to explore the idea that all of these elements in the church create and fashion us as God's people.

Another resource is *Religion in Multicultural Education*, edited by Farideh Salili and Rumhahn Hoosain. The contributing authors argue that there is the need to critically analyze the role of religion in the individual. Young students must be taught to understand and respect religious diversity well beyond the boundaries of their everyday experience. H. S. Wilson promotes a curriculum of "religious pluralism and brings the commonality of most religions in some version of the 'golden rule.'" Wilson also asserts that inter-religious dialogues demonstrate "that the attitude of well-being toward the other as a fellow human being regardless of that person's ethnicity, race, color, caste, gender, and even religion is enshrined in all major world religions."⁸ Also from the same book, in his chapter titled "Islamic Philosophy of Education: and Objective," Michael S. Merry offers effective tools for Christians to understand Islam and move through reconciliation.⁹

⁷ Maria Harris. *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989), 25.

⁸ H.S. Wilson, "The Other/Neighbor in World Religions," in *Religion in Multicultural Education*, ed. Farideh Salili and Hoosain Rrumjan (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 13.

⁹ Michael S. Merry, "Islamic Philosophy of Education and Western Islamic School: Points of Tension" in *Religion in Multicultural Education*, ed. Farideh Salili and Hoosain Rrumjan (Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing, 2006), 43.

In the field of missiology, *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities in Practice* will be of great help. It promotes a multidisciplinary approach and suggests valuable resources for the mission of the church. Andreas D'Souza in his chapter “Reconciliation in Practice: India Experience,” explains that “Reconciliation cannot take place unless our efforts toward it begin with an understanding of the root causes of violence and its endemic and spiral nature.”¹⁰ The mission of the church is becoming more challenging in the context of violence.

Scope and Limitations of the Project

This project seeks to provide Christian clergy with a curriculum that works toward peace in the interfaith context of Nigeria. Designed at Claremont School of Theology in California, the elements of the project cannot be implemented in Nigeria currently, due to the constraints of travel, distance and financial resources. However, aspects of the project will be tested with pastors living in the U.S.A.

Procedure for Integration

This project draws on ideas in the field of missiology, theological ethics and religious education. I have conducted library research including reviews of published studies, books or articles written from the perspective of peace education, conflict resolution, and reconciliation. My understanding of how mission can transform an interfaith community without conversion and the imposition of one's faith, my ethics seminar on Peace Studies and my class in Religious Education as Public Ministry will be helpful to promote insights from the perspective of theological ethics.

¹⁰ Andreas D'Souza, “Reconciliation in Practice: India Experience,” in *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 261.

I will use the work of Robert Schreiter, an internationally recognized expert in the areas of inculturation, reconciliation, and the world mission of the Church. In his book, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, Schreiter points Christians to ways to work together to achieve reconciliation through living a life of reconciliation. It calls for a revitalized spirituality as a means of changing attitudes and concepts. Such reconciliation, according to Schreiter, means “the cultivation of a relationship with God that becomes the medium through which reconciliation can happen. That relationship expresses itself in spiritual practices that create space for truth, for justice, for healing and for new possibilities.”¹¹

Christians are called to be “*Shalom*-makers.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Mt 5.9). *Shalom* is not only a gift of grace restored for us through Jesus Christ, but also a task and responsibility entrusted to all who are rightly called “children of God.” If we assume that all in God’s human family are sacred, which requires one to accept that other religions are worshipping the same God, we will find it to be the norm and not the exception to follow Jesus’ teaching, treating others as sacred, as valuable in and of themselves. I will integrate the theology of Shalom and the theory of peace education to design a transformative enriched curriculum, based on Maria Harris’ model in *Fashion Me a People: Curriculum in the Church*, for “the mobilizing of creative, educative powers in such a way as to ‘fashion a people’.”¹² I will also make use of her five different curricula used within the church such as: *Koinonia*, which is Community; *Leiturgia*, which is

¹¹ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 16.

¹² Harris, 8.

worship/Prayer; *Didache*, which is Teaching; *Kerygma*, which is Proclamation; and *Diakonia*, which is Service. This curriculum will also integrate the principles of peace education with the stances for non-violence and conflict resolution. As the incidents of violence increase within a community, I need to examine the Nigerian contexts of suffering, poverty, illiteracy, illness and underdevelopment. My critical thinking can become the avenue for transformation. In order to build this model of transformation, my research will endeavor to use trust and safety from the heart to put in practice the theology of *Shalom*.

This process comes in three stages: The first phase is the planning of a year-long curriculum for pastors, designed for in-depth understanding and assimilation of peace education for three age groups: children in Sunday school, youth in their Bible Study, and adults in their women's /men's fellowship groups. The purpose of the curriculum is to create a space in which church members can engage in honest conversation and learning together through dialogue, the arts, worship, and reflection. This curriculum will enable church members and pastors to identify the blessings of living in peace, of loving their neighbors and enemies. Peace must be actively pursued by both pastors and members in all parts of church activities. The first goal is to eventually make this curriculum available to congregations, and to increase their confidence and competence in teaching peace education. The curriculum will require steps to be taken to implement the methods and means whereby peace can be practiced in the church. The second goal is to equip all church members with the skills they need to deal with conflict in their own lives. Non-violent dispute resolution and peer mediation will be studied and practiced. The third goal is to determine how to work through diversity to strengthen non-violent

social action as we work to achieve peace and positive community-building. The fourth goal is to identify the lives and works of peacemakers of the Bible and of the twentieth century that will serve as role models.

The second phase encompasses the following religious practices: honest communication in the community, quarterly multi-religious prayer, understanding our personal gifts, acceptance of others and respect for differences, engagement in dialogue, healing ministry in the community, an annual interfaith celebration, workshops on Peace education, and spiritual retreats that will enhance living in peace with each other. The goals of these practices are: 1) to learn from the spirituality and resources for peace building of one's own faith and other faiths, 2) to work with other faiths in the pursuit of peace, and 3) to challenge the churches or mosques to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies. This entails a commitment to emotional and spiritual integrity, honest communication, and responsible speech and behavior.

The third phase is the organization of an evening workshop with Nigerian pastors in California to assess the practicability of the strengths and weaknesses of these religious practices, and the effectiveness of the curriculum in the Nigerian context. Prior to the workshop, copies of the designed curriculum and religious practices will be sent to the pastors with the following questions:

1. Examine the curriculum and assess the goals/ objectives and activities.
 - a) How relevant, useful or practical is this curriculum for the Nigerian context?
 - b) What areas need to be strengthened, modified or removed?
2. Assess the religious practices in terms of their value and applicability to the Nigerian context.

3. What are your interfaith experiences/ practices?

- a) How can your experience/ practices / models be used to make this project more meaningful?
- b) What other suggestions or recommendations would you make?

Chapter Outlines

Chapter 2: Historical Overview of Nigeria.

This chapter provides an overview of the history of Nigeria, and describes the current state of violent conflict, as well as the causes of the conflict. It is divided into four sections: 1) Description of Nigeria; 2) General Description of the Current State of Violent Conflict in Nigeria; 3) Overview of the Causes of Conflict in Nigeria; 4) Common History and Problems in Nigeria.

Chapter 3: Religion in Nigeria.

This chapter highlights the positive and the negative role of religion in Nigeria. It defines peace and describes the understanding of peace according to each of the various religions. This chapter is divided into three sections: 1) Positive Role of Religion in Nigeria; 2) Negative Role of Religion in Nigeria; 3) Promise of Peace from each Religion: i) Peace in the African Religion Context; ii) Peace in the Islamic Context; iii) Peace in the Judeo-Christian Context.

Chapter 4: Deconstruction and Reconstruction of Theological Discussion.

As the lack of peace has emerged as one of the most urgent and pressing issues today in Nigeria, this chapter identifies teachings that will need to be deconstructed in the major religions that can serve the community to create a dialogue of *shalom*, *salam* or of peace. In order for Muslims and Christians to cooperate, they must seek to teach their followers to cultivate the virtues of sincerity, purity of mind, attitudes of non-discrimination, loving-kindness, and peace. That will allow them to accept, respect, love, and trust one another, to care for and cooperate with one another.

Chapter 5: Models for Fostering Peace.

This chapter offers the proper way to foster peace through *Shalom* and provides the meaning of reconciliation and adequate steps toward reconciliation. This chapter is divided into three sections: 1) Theology of *Shalom*; 2) Reconciliation; 3) Pedagogies of Reconciliation.

Chapter 6: Designing a Peace Curriculum.

This chapter focuses on designing an effective curriculum for congregations in order to facilitate the teaching of peace education. This curriculum outlines everything needed to address violence prevention in the church and in the community. It is divided into four sections: 1) Curriculum Definition and Design; 2) Curriculum for Children; 3) Curriculum for Youths; 4) Curriculum for Adults.

Chapter 7: Healthy Religious Practices.

This chapter seeks to offer various healthy practices for peace in the Nigerian interfaith community that will reduce violence, teach people to live in peace, and offer the healing power of love as a remedy. These practices will emphasize ways to treat others with filial piety, fraternal love, loyalty, trustworthiness, and humanity; in order to coexist with others courteously, justly, honorably, and peacefully. This chapter is divided into nine sections: 1) Honest communication in the community; 2) Quarterly multi-religious prayer; 3) Understanding our personal gifts; 4) Acceptance of others and respect for differences; 5) Engagement in dialogue; 6) Healing ministry in the community; 7) Annual interfaith celebration; 8) workshops on peace education; 9) spiritual retreats.

Chapter 8: Forum of Dialogue.

This chapter reports the input of pastors in the U.S.A., and analyzes their feedback for the implementation of the curriculum and religious practices in Nigeria.

Chapter 9: Summary and Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF NIGERIA

This chapter provides an overview of the history of Nigeria, and describes the current state of violent conflict, as well as the causes of the conflict in order to understand the fundamental problems of the most populous country in West Africa.

Description of Nigeria

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is a West African country. It shares borders with the Republic of Benin in the west, Chad and Cameroon in the east, and Niger in the north. Its coast lies on the Gulf of Guinea in the south.¹ The Federal Republic of Nigeria occupies 923,768 sq km (336,667 sq mi) with the 2006 census population estimate of 140 million, making it Africa's most populous country, and life expectancy is about 50 years. Nigeria's diverse ethnic, linguistic, and religious characteristics contribute to cultural and artistic enrichment and fractious political conditions. It is an ethnically and religiously complex country with over 250 ethnic groups. "The major ethnic groups include the Hausa (21%), Yoruba (21%), Ibo (18%), and Fulani (9%). The Hausa have traditionally dominated the northern region of the country while the Yoruba have a pronounced influence in Nigeria's western region, and the Ibo reside largely in the country's eastern region."² The official language is English, but over 250 other languages are spoken. Nigeria is a country practicing three major religions: Christianity, Islam and African Religion, with other minor religious belief systems like the Bahai faith, Sat Guru

¹ Wikipedia, "Nigeria," accessed 23 Jul. 2007; available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nigeria>.

² Encyclopedia of the Nations, World Leaders 2003, "Nigeria," accessed 23 Jul. 2007; available from <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/World-Leaders-2003/index.html>.

Maharaji, and Hare Krishna. Approximately 40% of Nigerians are Muslim, 40% Christian, and 20% practice traditional African religions and other religions. On October 1, 1960, Nigeria gained its independence from the United Kingdom, and now consists of 36 states and the federal capital territory.³ Nigeria has not experienced a peaceful time from the colonial period to the present, especially between the two scriptural religions, Christianity and Islam. The recent killing of Christians in Borno and Muslims in Onisha because of the publication of a cartoon depicting the image of Mohamed is evidence of the violence experienced. According to the Catholic News Service,

The violence was set off by a Muslim demonstration against the publication of Cartoons satirical of Islam; when the demonstration got out of hand, a mob set fire to churches and the property of Christians, leaving several people dead, include a Catholic priest. In the days that followed, Christians in some southern Nigerian cities rioted, burning mosques and killing some Muslims. Authorities said that after three days of violence in the country, at least 120 people had been killed.⁴

Nigeria is the 5th largest oil producer in the world, and oil dominates the economy. The military governments in power between 1966 and 1999 failed to develop the economy in other areas. This, along with economic mismanagement and corruption, has contributed to Nigeria's poor economic performance and rising poverty. There is a highly unequal distribution of wealth in Nigeria with 66% of the population falling below the poverty line of \$1 a day. This puts it among the 20 poorest countries in the world.⁵ Under thirty years of military rule, Nigeria witnessed military uprisings, the economy suffered greatly, and the military rulers did not help the gradual recession of the

³ Wikipedia, "Nigeria," 1.

⁴ John Thavis, *Nigeria* [online]; accessed 26 Apr. 2006; available from <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0601156.htm>

⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, "Nigeria," accessed 19 Aug. 2007; available from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ni.html>.

economy. The volatile political situation in Nigeria during her military days discouraged foreign investors from investing in the country. The frequent coup d'états and the shaky financial state of the country due to the looting of the treasury paved the way for illiteracy and unemployment. As of June 2002, the statistics showed a disturbing 39 to 51% of the entire population as illiterate. This figure translates itself into the fact that out of the one hundred and forty million people in Nigeria, just about sixty six million are in the workforce. The issue of illiteracy becomes a troubling one when there are literally hundreds of thousands of unemployed and probably able-bodied men and women roaming the streets with nothing to do. This gives them room to perpetrate dastardly acts in order to survive. "The national unemployment rate, estimated by the Office of Statistics as 4.3 percent of the labor force in 1985, increased to 5.3 percent in 1986 and 7.0 percent in 1987, before falling to 5.1 percent in 1988"⁶ as a result of measures taken under the Structural Adjustment Program. Most of the unemployed were city dwellers, as indicated by urban jobless rates of "8.7 percent in 1985, 9.1 percent in 1986, 9.8 percent in 1987, and 7.3 percent in 1988."⁷ Underemployed farm labor, often referred to as disguised unemployed, continued to be supported by the family or village. Therefore, rural unemployment figures were less accurate than those for urban unemployment. Among the openly unemployed rural population, almost two-thirds were secondary-school graduates.

Looking at the historical experience in Nigeria, I see a frightening picture of the destructive consequences of human violence. Most frightening and devastating to peace,

⁶ *Country Studies*, "Nigeria, Labor," accessed 14 Aug. 2007; available from <http://www.country-studies.com/nigeria/labor.html>.

⁷ *Country Studies*, 1.

however, is that people have so persistently tried to justify and even glorify their ruthless abuse of power and their cruelty through the expression of their faith. In reaction to this insanity, I believe God in God's mercy awakened men like Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, who made progress in healing public life by using spirituality and the basic fundamentals of their faith that promote nonviolence. Therefore, I am looking at various healthy practices for peace in the Nigerian interfaith community that will reduce violence, teach people to live in peace, and offer the healing power of love as a remedy. This includes loving of our enemies. I will discuss what peace is, an understanding of peace according to each religion, and the causes of violence; and I will argue that for Christians, peace education must be based on a theology of *shalom*.

General Description of the Current State of Violent Conflict in Nigeria

Religion has remained a core, largely divisive, part of the politics of regions and ethnicity in Nigeria. The Bible and the Qu'ran have become part of the staple of using the divide-and-conquer strategy in the geopolitics of the country of almost 140 million largely energetic citizens. Religious conflicts, among other factors, in the northern region of Nigeria caused riots, against Igbo in 1953 and in the 1960s in the north; they were said to be fueled by religious conflict. Thousands of Ibos and easterners were killed in 1966-1967 which contributed to the declaration of the defunct Republic of Biafra. According to the former Biafra leader Ikemba Odumegwu Ojukwu, "It was necessary in the face of the religious and physical assault on our people to draw a line of safety where they can return... which we called Biafra."⁸ Religious tensions between Evangelical Christians and Islamic groups have long existed, but the anticipated extension of Islamic sharia law

⁸ USA Africa, "Religious Crisis in Nigeria" [online]; accessed 15 Aug. 2007; available from http://www.usafricaonline.com/chido_religiouscrises.html.

in a number of northern states has caused increased religious tension since December 1999. For example, in Ilorin, Kwara State, fourteen churches were burned to the ground by suspected Islamic fundamentalists. News of the introduction of sharia law on 1 January 2000 in Zamfara State led to widespread violence in February/March 2000 in which property was destroyed and more than 1,000 people were killed. A second state, Kano State, adopted Islamic law in June 2001 and in 2002, and a further ten northern states followed suit. The Nigerian central government has openly recognized the incompatibility of sharia law with the federal constitution of the nation. On September, 2001 in Plateau State, where Muslim-Christian violence led to over ten thousand killed, places of worship were also burned to the ground. In November, 2001 at least 10 people were killed and hundreds fled after Christians and Muslim militants clashed in Kaduna. According to the online *Christianity Today*, “May 1, 2004, between 67 and 300 are dead after Christian ethnic Taroks attacked Muslim cattle-herders in the town of Yelwa in central Nigeria's Plateau State.”⁹ Also in the same month 30 people were killed during a Muslim protest demonstration in Kano against the killing of several hundred Muslims in the small town of Yelwa in Plateau State. In February 2006, a riot in Maiduguri, where Muslims protested against cartoons caricaturing the prophet Mohamed, turned violent leaving 30 churches burned and at least 18 people dead.¹⁰

⁹ *Christianity Today*, “Nigerian Christians Attack Muslims, Kill Dozens,” accessed 12 Jul. 2006; available from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/mayweb-only/5-3-32.0.html>.

¹⁰ Segun Adewale, “Sectarian Mobs in Nigeria Kill,” *CBS News* [online]; accessed 15 Aug. 2007; available from [24http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/02/21/ap/world/mainD8FTMS8G0.shtml](http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/02/21/ap/world/mainD8FTMS8G0.shtml).

Overview of the Causes of Conflict in Nigeria

Each religion, whether it may be Christianity, Islam, or African Religion has experienced religious intolerance even within itself. The Christian crusade is a perfect example of such intolerance. Islam's uncompromising demand for unquestionable obedience and submission to the will of *Allah* often leads to unparalleled intolerance toward the poor and underprivileged. The African religion, which is viewed as being very tolerant and accommodating, cannot be excused from displaying an intolerant attitude. Its adherents are becoming more militant and vocally aggressive toward the historical world religions.

Christian exclusivism is related to the fact that allegiance to Christianity presents itself as a choice that entails renouncing all other religious options. Christians who hold strongly to this view are concerned that engaging other religions might be disloyal or might even lead to conversion to the other faiths. Also the exclusive statement on the nature of salvation has contributed to the conflict. For example, in Christianity, "Jesus is the only way to salvation" based on the following Bible passages: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life... Those who believe in him are not condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:16, 18). Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way? Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:5-6). Jesus is the one for whom the scripture says, "This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by the builders; it has become the cornerstone." There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by

which we must be saved (Acts 4:11-12). The pursuit of this concept makes it very hard for Christians to live in peace with their neighbor. It allows Christians to provoke and kill instead of following the prince of peace. “Jesus the only way to salvation” is problematic because it means imposing Jesus on others.

Another source of conflict in the community is that Islam claims to be the only religion handed down through the great Prophet Muhammad, believed to be the final Prophet of God. And the most rigid is the view that Jihad is a permanent obligation upon the believers to be carried out by a continuous process of warfare. Scholars in this school of thought like Majid Khadduri assert that God enjoins all believers to slay the polytheists wherever they may be found until they believe.¹¹ The verses of the Quran cited by the protagonists of this view in support of their stand are in Q2: 190-193 “Fight in the cause of God those who fight you; but do not transgress limits... There is no more tumult for oppression” (Q2: 217,246; Q9: 5, 13-14, 29,123).

This attitude of a double standard filtered into the political arena; consequently, while freedom of religion is embodied in the Nigerian constitution, in practice, each politician believes that his /her religion is above any other. Nigerian politicians have not been able to rise above the particularism of religious inclinations to the universality of accepting religious pluralism.

¹¹ Majid Khadduri, *War and Peace in the Law of Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1955), 16-17. See Muhib O. Opeloye, “The Qur’anic Guidelines on Inter-Religious Relations: An Overview,” in *Religion and Peace in Multi-faith Nigeria*, ed. Jacob K. Olupona (Ile –Ife, Nigeria: Printed by Obafemi Awolowo University, 1992), 83.

A Common History and Problems in Nigeria

My research has helped me understand that whatever religion we belong to, we have been affected by the same history. This story is affecting us and the future of our children. Since Nigeria gained its independence from Great Britain in 1960, the nation was controlled for the most part by different military governments from 1966 to 1999. In May 1999, the democratically elected government of Olusegun Obasanjo, a former military dictator, assumed power. He was re-elected to a second term in 2003. The current president of Nigeria is Umaru Yar'Adua, who was elected on May 29th, 2007.

Economy

According to Babajide Komolafe, despite a slowdown in economic growth in 2006, Nigeria's per capita income rose to \$1,036.2 from \$847.4 in 2005. The total federally-collected revenue stood at 5, 965.1 billion naira in 2006, 7.5 per cent over the level in 2005. The revenue performance was largely attributed to the receipts from the oil sector occasioned by the sustained increase in crude oil prices in the international oil market. Revenue from the non-oil sector, however, declined by 13.7 per cent from the level attained in 2005.¹²

¹² Babajide Komolafe, "Nigeria's Per Capita Income Rises to \$1,036," *Vanguard*, 9 August 2007 [online newspaper]; accessed 16 Aug. 2007; available from <http://www.vanguardngr.com/articles/2002/cover/august07/09082007/f309082007.html>.

Health Care

According to the U.S. Library of Congress in "Nigeria Health" health care, sharp disparities persisted in the availability of medical facilities among the regions, rural and urban areas, and socioeconomic classes. Severe economic stresses have had serious impacts throughout the country on the availability of medical supplies, drugs, equipment, and personnel. In the rapidly growing cities, inadequate sanitation and water supply increases the threat of infectious disease, while health care facilities have generally not been able to keep pace with the rate of urban population growth. There have been several serious outbreaks of infectious diseases, including cerebrospinal meningitis and yellow fever, for which, especially in rural areas, treatment or preventive immunization was often difficult to obtain. Chronic diseases, such as malaria and guinea worm, continued to resist efforts to reduce their incidence in many areas. The presence of acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) in Nigeria was confirmed by 1987, and appeared to be growing. Health indicators show that "the two leading causes of child mortality are malaria (30 per cent), and diarrhea (20 per cent), and that malnutrition contributes to 52 per cent of deaths of children under five."¹³ The spread of HIV/AIDS is now alarming and "Nigeria is in the epidemic phase of the AIDS pandemic. The reported prevalence of HIV/AIDS has risen from 1.8 per cent in 1990 to 4.5 per cent in 1995."¹⁴ In addition, cases of malaria are on the increase. Less than half of the population has access to safe water, and water-borne disease is widespread.¹⁵ The main cause of mortality is the risk of

¹³ D. Johnson, "Nigeria: Health Briefing Paper Overview of Nigeria's Health Care System," 10 Aug. 2007; available from <http://eldis.org/go/display?id=11709&type=document>

¹⁴ Johnson, 1.

¹⁵ U.S. Library of Congress, "Nigeria Health," accessed 10 Aug. 2007; available from <http://countrystudies.us/nigeria/50.htm>.

death in the early years of life, linked to the prevalence of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, pertussis, and neonatal tetanus. The top five infant-mortality diseases in the country have been identified as follows: 26 per cent malaria, 24 per cent diarrhea, 22 per cent Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) 22 per cent Vaccine Preventable Diseases (VPD) e.g. measles, and polio, 2 per cent malnutrition, 4 per cent other (e.g. chicken pox.)¹⁶

Water

In Nigeria, half the population has no access to clean water. Contaminated water is responsible for a myriad of health problems including dysentery and malaria. Women and children walk miles each way carrying heavy buckets and containers of water and taking hours that could be spent in other more profitable ways. Animals share the same water sources as humans, doing neither any good. During the dry seasons, water supplies are inadequate or non-existent in many villages, so that both people and cattle go thirsty.

Electricity

The electricity power output has been dropping. The country has a total installed power generating capacity of 4,000 mw, derived from both hydro and thermal power plants. But actual power generation is often much less, typically between 1,500 to 2,500 mw, current actual output in a mere 1,400 mw, at least 1,000 mw short of the actual demand in the country put at 2,400 mw.¹⁷

¹⁶ U.S. Library of Congress, 1.

¹⁷ Nigeria Business Information, "Investment Opportunities," accessed 12 Aug. 2007; available from <http://www.nigeriabusinessinfo.com/energy.htm>.

The research has helped me to understand that our society today lacks economic equality among Nigerians which decimates the other layers of society: the political, juridical level and the cultural, ideological level. Some neighborhoods and some people are beyond help. Some areas and groups don't need help. According to the World Factbook, 60% of the population is falling below the poverty line.¹⁸ In addition, "Social Development and Poverty in Nigeria"¹⁹ describes the percentage of poverty by geopolitical zone as follows:

Table Incidence of Poverty by Geopolitical Zones in Nigeria

Zone	Percentage in 1985-86	Percentage in 1997
North East	53.2	68.0
North West	48.4	62.0
Middle Belt	48.4	53.0
South East	30.9	79.5
South West	42.0	74.1
South South	38.0	78.6
Nationwide	43.04	69.2

The Nigerian social development and poverty website also affirms that: The poverty gap in Nigeria is widening, and a greater proportion of the nation's wealth is being concentrated in the hands of the wealthiest 20% of the nation. In Nigeria it is

¹⁸ Central Intelligence Agency, *World Factbook*, "Nigeria."

¹⁹ "Social Development and Poverty in Nigeria," [online]; accessed 12 Aug. 2007; available from http://www.oxfam.org.uk/what_we_do/resources/downloads/wp_nigeria/wp_nigeria_socdev.pdf.

thought that the highest income-earning status is enjoyed by just 10% of the population, who have a 31.4% share of the total national income. The poorest 10% receive just 1.3 percent. Nearly 50% of the total national income is owned by 20% of the highest income-earning group. An estimated 20% of the poorest portion of the population own 4% of the total national income.²⁰

This ignores the teaching of Islam and Christianity that each human person is important. Thus government's efforts should also consider the middle, and lower classes. We are living in a wealthy country with a revenue of “\$12.86 billion and 2.451 million bbl/of oil per day,”²¹ but there isn’t enough for the middle and lower classes. The system has led to the increase of poor and hungry people in all segments of society. We recognize the pain which results from these values: the pain of families in disarray and despair; the pain of alcoholism, suicide and abuse found in these families; the pain of the poor, the hungry, the homeless. There is need of implementing the theology of *shalom* because “Shalom is not about shifting power from one center to another. Rather, it involves distributing power among all equally.”²² The causes of this inequality in Nigeria are: weak governance, social conflict and gender, intersectoral and environmental negligence.

The above-stated needs of the community are to be addressed by both religions, using all theories and theologies to find solutions that will better the lives of their faithful members. Whatever the faith of each member of the community living in the above stated

²⁰ “Social Development and Poverty in Nigeria,” 10.

²¹ Central Intelligence Agency, “Nigeria,” 3.

²² Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, et al., *A Many Colored Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 206.

situation may be, they must pay as much attention to the interests and concerns of others as to their own. Each member of the community must take the first step to meet others; they will discover that the other is much more open than it seemed. Each member in the community must never lose patience, and always find a new beginning. They need to be at peace with each other.

This beginning may take place by way of the resources that religion bring to us. In the next chapter, I will discuss the negative and positive role religion in the Nigerian complex context.

CHAPTER 3

ROLE OF RELIGION

This chapter highlights the positive and the negative role of religion in Nigeria. It defines peace and describes the understanding of peace according to each of the three major religions.

Generally, religion plays various roles, according to Wilson, Henry Steward in “The Other/Neighbor in World Religions,”

Religion plays a double role in most communities. On the one hand, it provides meaning for life with references to higher powers going beyond the appeal, to the uniqueness of humans in creation and the freedom they enjoy in relation to the rest of creation. On the other hand, for the sake of peace and harmony, it encourages obedience to authority and adherence to rules and regulations to maintain healthy bonds within the community¹

The role of religion in a community preserves moral values and enhances the quality of life. This is achieved through imparting beliefs and practices to their adherents and by transmitting the faith through rites, rituals, customs, institutions, and teaching. In addition, religion provides a framework for the individual's lives as well as life in the community. Religion is an important basis of identity for many people and is an important source of legitimacy for actions they can support or oppose in their personal and social life. The role of religion is to bring people to an awareness of life. It is to transform the world, to come to see the world as God sees the world and to bring it as close to the vision of God as one possibly can. That is why in “The Role of Religion in Today's Society,” Joan Chittister asserts that:

¹ Wilson, “The Other/Neighbor in World Religions,” 14.

Real religion is not about building temples and keeping shrines. Real religion is about healing hurts, speaking for and being with the poor, the helpless, the voiceless and the forgotten who are at the silent bottom of every pinnacle, every hierarchy and every system in both state and church, church and state. Real religion, the scripture insists, is not about transcending life; real religion is about our transforming life. The gospel of the transfiguration calls us to Sabbath; calls us to become enlightened; calls us to change our attitudes about the role of religion; calls us to understand the nature of religion itself; because the so-called rational has failed. Religion calls us to the Beatitudes, to the works of mercy, to the casting out of demons, to the doing of miracles for those in need, to the being and act of irrational love and burning justice of God.²

In Nigeria, religion is a very important factor in the current condition of the society. It contains vital ingredients that can contribute to the development of a healthy and stable order in the nation, or it may be the reinforcer of ethnic conflict. Religion has contributed to the westernization that Christianity brought to the South, which included education, literacy and access to jobs in colonial service. Islam brought a new system of ideas, a new way of life and literacy by means of the Arabic culture. Religion divides Nigeria, and the imperfect division affects the relationship between religions. Religion has a strong influence on the social and moral lives of Nigerians. Instead of religion acknowledging and promoting the right of others to believe and to act differently in a multicultural society, religion has instead contributed to many atrocities and acts of destruction.

Definition of Peace

According to the Webster dictionary, peace is “a state of tranquility or quiet, a freedom from civil disturbance, a state of security or order within a community provided for by law or custom, a disquieting or oppressive thoughts or emotions, a harmony in

² Joan Chittister, *The Role of Religion in Today's Society*, 24 Nov. 1991 [online]; accessed 15 Jul. 2007; available from <http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/chittister>.

personal relations.³ This peace is essential to humanity. Peace defeats disharmony and celebrates serenity, it believes in giving, sharing, caring and respecting life. Peace is necessary for individuals within the same religious community, between two or more religions, between peoples and states. Christians and Muslims have a duty to promote this tranquility of order. All religions preach peace and believe that the abode of God is where peace is fully experienced. Peace is a divine attribute in each religion, because in each religion it is God's commandment to live in peace with each other. For Christians, this abode of God or Kingdom of God does not come in one dramatic event sometime in the future, although it is also the expectation of a perfect stage at the end of history. The kingdom is present in every act of love, in every manifestation of truth, in every moment of joy, and in every experience of the holy.

Peace as Found in the African Religion

In traditional African societies, peace is a down-to-earth and practical concept. In African religions, peace is conceived not in relation to conflict and war, but in relation to order, harmony and equilibrium. It is a religious value in that the order, harmony and equilibrium in the universe and society is believed to be divinely established and the obligation to maintain them is religious. It is also a moral value since good conduct is required of human beings if the order, harmony and equilibrium are to be maintained. The promotion and enhancement of life is the central principle of African traditional morality. The goal of all moral conduct is therefore the fullness of life. Human life is considered full in Africa when it is marked by spiritual, material, and social blessings; when the network of relations with the spiritual, human and material beings is as it should

³ Webster's New College Dictionary, s. v. "Peace."

be. And this is what is meant by peace in African Religions. "Peace is good relationship well lived; health, absence of pressure and conflict, being strong and prosperous"⁴ Peace is the totality of well-being: fullness of life here and hereafter, what the Yoruba call *alafia*, that is "the sum total of all that man may desire: an undisturbed harmonious life."⁵ If one is therefore lacking in any of the basic things such as good health, a wife or a husband, children, means of sustenance of one's family or if one, though possessing these things, does not enjoy a good relationship with the other members of the community (living or dead), one cannot be said to have peace. Mere material wealth or progress that is not accompanied by an integral moral life is neither regarded as fullness of life nor is it envied in traditional African societies. Any action that is capable of hindering another from attaining the fullness of life is considered a breach of peace. A selfish or unjust person, even when he or she is not violent, is anti-social and is therefore regarded by the Africans as an enemy of peace.

Harmony is a fundamental category in traditional African religion and thought. In the community, harmony entails smooth relationships between persons and other beings. No attempt is made to deny or cancel out differences; rather, all effort is devoted to find a way in which differences can continue to co-exist harmoniously. In personal life, such harmony consists in the ability to reconcile one's desires with one's means, coordinate one's thoughts, sentiments and their verbal expressions, as well as the ability to discharge one's religious and social duties. One who is able to do this will experience inner peace.

The goal of interaction of beings in African world-views is the maintenance of the integration and balance of the beings in it [the world]. Harmonious interaction of beings leads to the mutual strengthening of the beings involved, and enhances the growth of life. A pernicious influence from one

⁴ Robert Rweyemamu, "Religion and Peace," *Studia Missionalia* 38 (1989): 381.

⁵ Rweyemamu, 382.

being weakens other beings and threatens the harmony and integration of the whole.⁶

The centrality of harmony is the prayer for peace: elders speaking with one voice, tranquillity, agreement between the gourd cup and the vessel and the banishment of every ill word. These are all fundamental requirements for the realization of the peace prayed for. Since human beings come in different shapes, sizes and with all sorts of different ideas in their heads, traditional African societies go to great lengths in trying to accommodate the various opinions of their members. Africans are known for their long drawn-out village discussions in search of consensus. In traditional African debates, the goal is always to take everybody along in any decision that will be binding on all. And in the interest of harmony, the discussion is continued until the last skeptic has been won over. It often happens that the few who do not share the opinion of the many voluntarily give up theirs, in the interest of harmony.

Any person who causes a breach in the harmonious co-existence of the members of the community is made to make up for it through just reparation or restitution, depending on the offence committed. In African Religions, peace in the community cannot be separated from justice. Peter Sarpong in "African Traditional Religion and Peace," underlines this inseparable relationship between justice and peace within his context: "Justice produces peace... there can be no peace without justice... Peace is honourable... peace can never be achieved when you are disgraced or when you disgrace another person. People must relate to one another on equal terms."⁷ Peace is not something that happens, but rather a situation that arises when justice happens. It is a

⁶ Emeife Ikenga-Metuh, *Comparative Studies of African Religion* (Onisha, Nigeria: IMICHO Publishers, 1987), 78.

⁷ Peter K. Sarpong, "African Traditional Religion and Peace," *Peace* 38 (1989): 351-70.

pleasant state of things that happens when the state of things is just. The unwritten moral code of the Africans contains not only things that are forbidden but also things that must be done as compensation and in reparation for the injury which immoral conduct inflicts on individuals and on the society at large. Such compensation and reparation are usually based on past experiences. People are usually at a loss when a person commits a sin or an immoral act hitherto unknown in the community.

The harmony that is to be maintained for humans to experience peace is not only social but also spiritual and cosmic.

A man's well-being consists... in keeping in harmony with the cosmic totality. When things go well with him he knows he is at peace and of a piece with the scheme of things and there can be no greater good than that. If things go wrong then somewhere he has fallen out of step... The whole system of divination exists to help him discover the point at which the harmony has been broken and how it may be restored.⁸

In many African societies, there are specific periods of the year marked out for the promotion of peace. During this period, which may last for a week or a month, litigations are suspended while quarrels and all forms of violent and unjust acts are avoided for fear of incurring the wrath of God, the deities and the ancestors. This sacred period sometimes precedes the planting season and it is believed that any breach which is not adequately atoned for would lead to a poor harvest. If a person breaks either the spiritual or the cosmic harmony, the lack of peace that ensues reverts on the entire community. Sometimes individual reparations in terms of sacrifices are not enough to restore the harmony, and all the members of the community are called upon to right the wrong. There is thus a strong sense of the communal dimension of immoral conduct.

⁸ John V. Taylor, *The Primal Vision* (London: SCM Press, 1963), 67.

Peace in the World of Islam

According to Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad in “Attainment of Inner Peace,” the concept of peace in Islam is two-fold. “Firstly, to be at peace with God and then, secondly, to be at peace with oneself and with the rest of the world.”⁹ In Islam the word peace does not only mean to be at rest or to have a compromise of a perfect understanding with the rest of the world. It also means submission. The meaning of this one single word has two aspects. One is peace as ordinarily understood and the other is peace in the sense of submission. Ahmad also asserts that, “according to the Qur'anic concept of peace, no peace on earth can ever be conceived, not to mention established, by human effort. It cannot even be conceived theoretically without man finding God, the Creator, without recognizing the hand of the Creator universally at work.”¹⁰ So, once man recognizes the Creator, the second step is to be at peace with the Creator, and this peace has this dual meaning: First, you are not to do anything which creates a distance between you and the Creator, and secondly, you are to practice submission to the will of God. So, both of these meanings join hands at this stage. Submission to the will of God is the only means of attaining peace with God, and this is a declaration which is proven by human experience. It has a profound wisdom which is universally experienced by humanity. If children are at peace with their parents, it is impossible for them to defy their orders and wishes. If one delves deeper into the meaning of peace, one will realize that ultimately the meaning of peace is submission. If one submits to the authority or the will or the desire of someone so completely that nothing in the person is at war with the desire, will,

⁹ Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, “Attainment of Inner Peace,” 21 Aug. 1996 [online]; accessed 14 Dec. 2006 available from <http://www.alislam.org/library/links/00000193.html>, 1.

¹⁰ Ahmad, 2.

or the way of life or the style of another person, whom one loves which is also the key and link to Christianity, therefore one will be at peace with the person. So in Islam the journey to peace begins with the attainment of peace with the Creator, and for this one must understand God's attributes. One must know what God is, and this in Islam cannot be achieved through delving deeper into oneself, because one can make many mistakes. If there is a God, God has to be an external reality. If God is an external reality, then God must introduce God's self to humanity. That is what actually happened in all the divine religions. It was God who revealed God's self to humankind. It was never man or woman who by his/her own efforts reached God, without help from God.

Islam as a religion of peace recognizes other religions, and is open to dialogue. The Qur'an in Sura 2:256; God said "Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error..." There are many other verses in the Quran that deal with the nature of spreading God's message. One of the favorite quotes is verse 10:99 "If it had been thy Lord's Will, they would all have believed, all who are on earth! Wilt thou then compel mankind, against their will, to believe!" These verses and many others show how much emphasis Islam places on the mind of people, Muslims or non-Muslims. In this regard, Muslims are governed by the rules that the relationship with non-Muslims should be based on justice, mutual respect, cooperation, and communication.

Peace in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

The Christian concept of peace is revealed in both the Hebrew Bible and in the New Testament. In the Hebrew Bible, peace is inseparable from righteousness and justice. These concepts are embodied in one Hebrew word that connotes right

relationship between two or more parties. This word is usually translated as "righteousness," referring not only to doing morally correct deeds, but also to living rightly in relationship with others. Righteousness is also closely connected to justice, because the righteous person acts with justice in the civil or judicial sphere. The necessary link between righteousness and peace can be seen, for example, in Isaiah's vision of a future day when a righteous king will reign over Israel and God's Spirit will be poured out upon the people:

Until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. The effect of righteousness will be peace and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. (Isa. 32:15-17)

With a similar picture in mind, the Psalmist looks forward to a time when God's salvation pervades the nation. Is that day, "Unfailing love and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed" (Ps. 85:10). From the biblical perspective, therefore, the absence of conflict is only the bare beginning of peace. True peace includes personal wholeness, corporate righteousness, political justice, and prosperity for all creation. That is exactly the way God intended things to be when God created the garden, the paradise. Perhaps no term better describes God's perfect paradise than "peaceful," a world full of wholeness, righteousness, justice, and prosperity.

The Hebrew concept of peace is closely related to the New Testament notion of fellowship. According to Walker Homolka in *The Gate to Perfection: The Idea of Peace in Jewish Thought*, "Shalom includes an all-around, comprehensive sense of welfare,

facilitating and supporting life.”¹¹ Also Benjamin Davidson in his *Analytical and Chaldee Lexicon* describes the basic meaning of shalom as “wholeness,” “integrity,” “perfection,” “well-being.”¹² In addition, according to Joon Surh Park in *Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace*, shalom means “wholeness in the sense that no component part is missing, impaired or damaged. It means also that all parts are in harmony, order and unity.”¹³

From this basic meaning, shalom is used comprehensively in a variety of ways depending on the context. For example, when shalom is used in reference to physical conditions, it means health in the sense that a body is in a state of wholeness. When shalom is used in the context of material condition, it means prosperity, good harvest and fertility. When shalom is used in this sense, the word is often paired with *tobah*, which has the specific meaning of prosperity (Deut. 23.6; Ezra 9.12). When shalom is used in the context of warfare, it means victory. King David summoned Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, and inquired how the war prospered (2 Sam. 11.7). David's question was literally “how was the shalom of the war?” It is a seemingly contradictory phrase if we understand shalom as meaning “peace.” When soldiers return from the battle “in shalom,” it means a victorious homecoming (Josh. 10.21; Judg 8.9; 11.31; 1 Kings 22.27). Peggy Cowan in *Biblical Basis for Peacemaking*, wrote that shalom “is often used in reference to personal relationships, and it means “wholeness” of relationship, i.e., a relationship with goodwill and harmony.”¹⁴ This is the reason why shalom was used as an identification of friend or foe when two parties encountered one another (1 Kings 2.13).

¹¹ Walter Homolka, *The Gate to Perfection: The Idea of Peace in Jewish Thought* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1994), 5.

¹² Homolka, 5.

¹³ Joon Surh Park, “Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.”

¹⁴ Peggy Cowan, “Biblical Basis for Peacemaking,” [online]; 12 Nov. 2007; available from <http://www.pcusa.org/peacemaking/basis.htm>.

Shalom is also used in the same sense on the level of international relations. When two countries are in the relation of shalom, it does not simply mean that there is no war between the two. Rather, it goes beyond that and means that a relationship of amity, alliance and cooperation exists between them (1 Kings 5:12).

Shalom, of course, includes the state of peace in the sense of the absence of war. But such peace is one of many manifestations of shalom. Shalom does bring peace, and the breakdown of shalom often leads to war. However, the cessation of armed conflict does not automatically bring shalom. Shalom in the biblical sense is a much more comprehensive and dynamic concept than peace in a narrow sense as God's gift (Is. 26:3-12) and God's intention (Jer. 29:11). It is the completion of God's purpose for creation that is described as a covenant of shalom (Num. 25:12).

Although given by God, shalom is not to be passively awaited, but actively pursued (Ps. 34:14). "Shalom also involves positive relationships between peoples and persons. Positive relationships within the community means that the needs of all persons are met, and there is material well-being, economic security, and prosperity for all" (Isa. 54:13; 66:12, Jer. 29:5-7, Ez. 34:27-29, Ps. 37:11, 72:3, Hag. 2:9). Shalom involves absence of war, but goes beyond absence of war to include security and lack of fear. The full meaning of shalom can only be grasped when human well-being is balanced. After the fall, humankind became separated from the creator, from each other, and from the natural world. The wholeness of God's creation, shalom, was broken into chaotic fragmentation. The whole creation waited for the coming of the one who would restore the broken shalom to its original wholeness. In summary, "shalom can be defined as the

welfare and state of completion of all creatures, arising from a divine will for peace, including their peaceful coexistence in a way of life on God's commandments.”¹⁵

The Christian community reads in the New Testament, “When the fullness of time was come,” God sent his Son, Jesus. He is the one who came to heal the broken relations and recover the lost shalom. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” St. Paul proclaims (Rom. 5.1). Jesus Christ, by his work of reconciliation, restores shalom in heaven and earth. Paul says, “..through him [Jesus Christ] to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1.20). In the Letter to the Ephesians, Paul even calls Jesus “our peace,” who breaks down the wall of hostility between humankind and God. “...he is our peace, who...has broken down the dividing wall of hostility...so making peace he might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end” (Luke 2.14-16). With the coming of Jesus Christ, the way was opened for the restoration of the lost shalom to humankind. This is the reason why, at Jesus' birth the angels of heaven sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased” (Luke 2.14). Jesus Christ is the great restorer of shalom and thus the Christian church throughout history has proclaimed that he is “the Prince of Peace (shalom).”

In Greek, *Eἰρήνη* is the word for Peace, meaning the absence of war. The New Testament includes all of the meanings of shalom: good relationships among peoples and nations (Mk. 9:50, Rom. 12:18-19, Eph. 2:15, Heb. 12:14), healthy relationships within

¹⁵ Homolka, 6

the community, a quality of life in the Spirit or in relation to God, a gift of Jesus, reconciliation effected by or through Jesus, and a quality to be pursued by humans.

When we have peace with God, we live in intimate fellowship with God. Similarly, peaceful (peace-full) human relationships are also characterized by *koinônia* (fellowship). Christ lived a life of peace in a world of violence, and this is what we are called as Christians to do. We are called to live a life of unconditional love, a love which casts out fear. We are called to “not worry about tomorrow” (Mat 6:34) to live each day like a lily of the field. So long as we set conditions on peace, we do not have even a modicum of the faith which was preached by Jesus. John Dear in “Jesus Christ: Model of the Nonviolent Human Being” asserts that

We are commanded by Jesus to practice nonviolence. Humanity is charged with the grace of God; our sin is the conscious choice not to act in the grace of nonviolence. Given our violence, we need to ask the God of nonviolence for the grace to become like God, to renounce our violence and join faith communities of nonviolence to help us live lives of active love. Jesus is the model human being because he is nonviolent. He is just, faithful, and unconditionally loving. He loves enemies; serves people; tells truth; builds community; prays to the God of peace; and risks his life in active nonviolence, even to arrest, torture, and execution. Because of this steadfast nonviolence, God raises Jesus from the dead to uphold his life for all humanity to emulate.¹⁶

In analyzing both concepts of peace, it becomes evident that the concept of peace in Islam is related to submission to God. This can easily affect living in peace in an interfaith community because the God another person is worshipping may not be viewed

¹⁶ John Dear, “Jesus Christ: Model of the Nonviolent Human Being,” 12 Dec. 2001 [online]; accessed 12 Aug. 2007; available from <http://www.forusa.org/interfaith/christianity.html>.

as the same as the Muslim's God. "Peace" in Christianity is related to God raising Jesus as a model of peace. Its equivalent cognate in Arabic is *salaam*.

The theology of *shalom* departs from its Christocentric focus by asserting principles, values, and ethical commitments across different religions and spiritual traditions that are essential to comprehensive peace-making. It sees peace, theologically, as the constant re-creation of the harmony between God and humans, between humans themselves, and with nature.

All the three religions value peace as a healthy relationship within the self, the community, and nature; it is a quality of life that cannot be conceived without God.

Negative Role of Religion in Nigeria

The major religious conflict in Nigeria is between the adherents of Islam and Christianity. The natural rivalry between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria has continued to be compounded by the many inequalities among groups inherited from the colonial period; this affects the political situation in Nigeria, where the nation has not experienced peace from the colonial period to the present. Within the past few years, Christians have felt that there is increased Islamic influence in the country, that Muslims have too much political power. Despite the well-known deep religiousness of the people, the country's political leaders have continued to maintain that Nigeria is officially a secular state. Moreover, its constitution grants in chapter 4 article 38 freedom of worship to every citizen, "Every person shall be entitled to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, including freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom to manifest and

propagate his religion or belief in worship, teaching, practice and observance”¹⁷ as a fundamental human right, but the fact that every Nigerian belongs to a religious tradition must not be underplayed. There is a preponderance of Islamic influence in the northern states although there are also numerous Muslims throughout other parts of the country. Christianity predominates in the southern states. Where one religion dominates, adherents of other religions feel persecuted. The claims of each of the two ‘foreign’ religions Islam and Christianity have invariably resulted in a state of antagonism because of their doctrine of expansion rather than interaction. Islam and Christianity both have exclusivist beliefs that thwart any attempts of interaction. Christianity claims to be the way, the truth and the life exemplified by the person of Jesus Christ. Islam claims to be the only religion handed down from God through the great Prophet Muhammad, who they claim is the final Prophet of God.

The religious dimension of life is interconnected with the political and economical dimension. Each one of these affects the other and many use the other for its own interest.

The real reason for the violence is not ethnic or religious division, most Nigerians have peacefully coexisted for centuries, but the scramble for scarce resources and political clout. Though Nigeria produces some 2.4 million barrels of oil a day, most Nigerians live in poverty. The average person earns \$290 a year. Because the money from oil exports trickles down only through a corrupt system of patronage, those in office hold huge power. To gain that power, politicians manipulate religious and ethnic differences.¹⁸

In addition, the economic situation in Nigeria is deplorable and only based on oil, with a total neglect of agriculture and other forms of development. This makes the youth

¹⁷ *Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria*, 1999; accessed 3 Feb. 2008; available from <http://www.nigerialaw.org/ConstitutionOfTheFederalRepublicOfNigeria.htm>.

¹⁸ “Europe,” *Time*, 1 June 2004 [magazine online]; accessed 12 Dec. 2006; available from <http://www.time.com/time>.

experience unemployment and exposes them to the danger of joining gangs which are ready to be violent. Also prevalent are the recurrent teachers' strikes in demand of better conditions of service, the decay in moral conduct in our schools, and a breakdown in relationships leading to violent acts that destroy life instead of protecting it. There are many children silently suffering the effects and consequences of violence. This violence takes many different forms: between children on streets, at school, in family life and in the community. There is physical violence, psychological violence, socio-economic violence, environmental violence and political violence. Too many children live in a culture of violence. According to the Human Rights Watch, of May 23, 2005,

In the central region that lies between the mainly Muslim north and largely Christian south, armed Muslims on February 24, 2004 killed more than 75 Christians in the town of Yelwa, at least 48 of them inside a church compound. Then on May 2 and 3, hundreds of well-armed Christians surrounded the town from different directions and killed around 700 Muslims. They also abducted scores of women, some of whom were raped. Both attacks were well-organized, and in both instances, the victims were targeted on the basis of their religion. One week later, reacting to reports of the Yelwa attacks, Muslims in the northern city of Kano on May 11 and 12 turned against Christian residents of the city, killing more than 200. There have been numerous other incidents in Plateau State over the last four years, starting with the outbreak of violence in the city of Jos in September 2001, in which around 1,000 people were killed in less than a week. In 2002 and 2003, violence spread to other parts of the state. Human Rights Watch estimates that between 2,000 and 3,000 people have died in communal violence in Plateau State since 2001.¹⁹

Political power is the motivating factor behind various religious wars, but religion is merely used to fuel the conflict. Christianity and Islam both consider their message to be universal. In addition, poverty, underdevelopment, injustice, and corruption are fertile grounds for the rise or growth of extremist religious tendencies. In such societies those who reject the present situation, or who oppose the government in power, may find it

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, accessed 12 Dec. 2006; available from <http://www.wwrn.org/article>.

easy to get the support of the suffering poor who are the vast majority, by appealing to extravagant religious claims.

Furthermore, other causes of violence, aggression, and lack of trust between Muslims and Christians are the lack of adequate knowledge each one has about the other's faith. Muslims' relations with the Christians of Nigeria are marred by dissension, acrimony, rancor and discord, leading to perpetual religious crises and controversies which have constituted a threat to the stability of the nation. In my view, other causes of this dispute between Christians and Muslims are the fanatical tendencies of some adherents of the two faiths, their ignorance of the blessing of living in religious pluralism and the misinterpretation of the scriptures. Learning about religions is a way to cultivate appropriate knowledge and relationships without running immediately into the theological walls of Christian/ Muslim exclusivism or treating the dogmas that form us as static ideals. This learning can create a foundation for informed and ongoing theological reflection; in fact, such learning will entail theological reflection, as will be clear in the learning process. In her book *Understanding Other Religious Worlds*, Judith A. Berling asserts that

In this process learners (1) enter other worlds through engaging and crossing boundaries of significant difference; (2) begin the task of interpretation and understanding by responding from their distinctive religious locations; (3) enter a series of conversations and dialogues both with the voices of the other tradition and also with other Christians seeking to develop more flexible language for understanding Christian tradition in relation to other religious possibilities, (4) begin to live out new relationships and Christian practices based on the new understanding ; and (5) internalize the learning process so that they can continue developing such conversations and relationships. The stages in the process do not always follow in sequence; the various aspects of learning reinforce one another.²⁰

²⁰ Judith A. Berling, *Understanding Other Religious Worlds* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2004), 64.

I have shown the role that religion can play to bring out both conflict and the best in a society. In the next chapter, I will look at the beginning of the deconstruction and reconstruction that can be done in Islam and Christianity as a way of bringing out the potential that both have for energizing and leading the efforts towards justice in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 4

THEOLOGY OF DECONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

This chapter identifies teachings that will need to be deconstructed and reconstructed in the major religions that can serve the community to create a dialogue of *shalom*, *salam* or of peace. This will allow them to accept, respect, love, and trust one another, to care for and cooperate with one another.

The lack of peace has emerged as one of the most urgent and pressing issues today in Nigeria. Violence among people of faith is growing daily. It is necessary and natural that the maintenance of peace is a life-and death issue. In this chapter I will try to identify things that caused the two religions, Christianity and Islam, to be in conflict, and which of these needs to be deconstructed in both religions that can serve the community to create a dialogue of *shalom* or of peace; and I will argue that both religions can create a reconstruction of their theology for *shalom*.

Christian exclusivism is related to the fact that allegiance to Christianity presents itself as a choice that entails renouncing all other religious options. Christians who hold strongly to this view are concerned that engaging other religions might be disloyal or might even lead to conversion to the other faiths. Also the exclusive statement on the nature of salvation has contributed to the conflict. For example in Christianity, “Jesus is the only way to salvation” is based on the following Bible passages: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, so that everyone that believes in him may not die but have eternal life... whoever believes in the Son is not judged; but whoever does not believe has already been judged, because he has not believed in God's only Son” (John 3:16,18). Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going; so how

can we know the way to get there?" Jesus answered him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me" (John 14:5-6). Jesus is the one for whom the scripture says, "The stone that you builders despised turned out to be the most important of all." Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us (Acts 4:11-12). In the pursuit of this concept, it is very hard for Christians to live in peace with their neighbors. It allows Christians to provoke and kill instead of following the prince of peace. "Jesus the only way to salvation" is problematic because it means imposing Jesus on others.

Another source of conflict in the community is that Islam claims to be the only religion handed down through the great Prophet Muhammad, whom they claim is the final Prophet of God. And the most rigid is the view that *jihad* is a permanent obligation upon the believers to be carried out by a continuous process of warfare. Scholars in this school of thought such as Majid Khadduri assert that God enjoins all believers to slay the polytheists wherever they may be found until they believe.¹ The verses of the Qur'an cited by the protagonists of this view in support of their stand are in Q2: 190-193 "Fight in the cause of God those who fight you; but do not transgress limits... There is no more tumult for oppression" (Q2: 217,246; Q9: 5, 13-14, 29,123). In addition, the Qur'an is very explicit about the justice part of the relationship when God stated in Sura 60:08 "Allah forbids you not, with regard to those who fight you not for (your) Faith nor drive you out of your homes, from dealing kindly and justly with them: for Allah loveth those who are just."

The crisis situation has helped me to consider the radical model of the dynamics of social change as an adequate model for the Nigerian context. This perspective is a

¹ Khadduri, 16-17.

transformative/ interdependent/ participative one. Through the lens of this model, I look into the reconstruction of the concept of *jihad* and that of “Jesus the only way” as one way of aspiring to real peace into an interfaith community.

The Concept of *Jihad*

Today, the concept of *jihad* is the world's foremost source of terrorism, inspiring a worldwide campaign of violence by self-proclaimed jihadist groups. In the name of *jihad* these groups have killed many Christians in the northern part of Nigeria. The Egyptian Islamic *Jihad* killed Anwar El-Sadat in 1981. The *Laskar Jihad* is responsible for the murder of more than 10,000 Christians in Indonesia. For two decades, the jihadists in Sudan have physically attacked non-Muslims, looted their belongings and killed their males. Nearly 3,000 people were killed when the World Trade Center was destroyed on September 11, 2001. The recent bomb attacks in London are yet another example of the terror caused by these self-proclaimed jihadists. All these instances lead many non-Muslims to view Islam as a violent, destructive and barbaric religion. Despite jihad's record as a leading source of conflict for 14 centuries, causing untold human suffering, *jihad* is a concept that has been mis-interpreted. Ideally it can become a motivation to be non-violent.

Taking into account the complexity of the concept of jihad and not simply equating it with violence and bloodshed, this paper argues that jihad is a healthy practice in an interfaith community. To achieve this, I will define the concept of *jihad* in the Qur'an and in Hadith, trace *jihad* in history, and explore the positive aspects of jihad. According to Wikipedia, the free on-line encyclopedia, “Jihad is an Islamic term, from the Arabic root *jhd* (“to exert utmost effort, to strive, struggle”), which connotes a wide

range of meanings: anything from an inward spiritual struggle to attain perfect faith to a political or military struggle to further the Islamic cause. The meaning of “Islamic cause” is of course open to interpretation. The term is frequently translated into English as “holy war”, although jihad can apply to more than just warfare.”² According to John Kalner in *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know*, the term jihad occurs only four times in the Qur’ān, but “words etymologically associated with it are found about forty times in the text.”³ The concept awakens fear and misunderstanding in the view of Islam by non-Muslims. Therefore, there is a great need to provide a detailed explanation of what *jihad* means. According to Wikipedia, “Muslims generally classify jihad into two forms, *jihad al-akbar*, the greater jihad, is said to be the struggle against one's soul (*nafs*), while *jihad al-asgar*, the lesser *jihad*, is external and is in reference to physical effort, i.e. fighting.”⁴

In understanding the concept of *jihad* in the Qur’ān, there is a need to distinguish between what the Qur’ān says, and how it has been interpreted. According to Clinton Bennett in *The Concept of Violence, War and Jihad in Islam*, “There are several Qur’anic verses, however, where the word *Jihad* has been interpreted as being synonymous with the words war and fighting, as in Q2: 215, 8: 41, 49: 15, 61: 11, 66:9”⁵ The most commonly cited verse used to justify the equation of *jihad* with violence is 61: 11, which reads, “Strive (*Jihad*) your utmost in the cause of Allah with your property and your persons.”⁶ But in reality those verses mentioned, are not *jihad*, but something different from the meaning of *jihad*. The four times *jihad* is mentioned, it has been used

² Wikipedia, “Jihad,” accessed 4 Apr. 2005; available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jihad>.

³ John Kalner, *Islam: What Non-Muslims Should Know* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 119.

⁴ Wikipedia, “Jihad,” 2.

⁵ Clinton Bennett, “The Concept of Violence, War and Jihad in Islam,” *Dialogue and Alliance* 18, 1 (Spring/Summer 2004): 5.

⁶ Khadduri, 56. Cited in S. Bukhari, *Sahih al Bukhari*, vol. 4, trans. M. M. Khan, rev. ed. (New Delhi: Kititab Bhavan, 1987), 37.

in the sense of effort and strength and not in the sense of war and fighting.⁷ The first verse in the Qur'an in this connection is 9:24. In this verse of the Qur'an, Muslims are enjoined to extend their full support to the mission of the prophet, to the extent of making sacrifices. Here the phrase "*jihad fisabilil lah*" has appeared for helping the prophet in his mission of dissemination of the message of Islam, and not for waging war. The second verse of the Qur'an that mentions Jihad says: "Do not listen to the unbelievers, but strive with them strenuously with it (the Qur'an)" (22:52). The word *jihad* is here again clearly used for the mission of the Prophet. No other sense can be implied by the word *jihad* in this context of doing jihad. The word *jihad* appears in the Qur'an for the third time in 60:1, "If you have come out to strive in My Way and seek My Good pleasure" (60:1). This verse was revealed shortly before the conquest of Mecca. The Prophet was preparing for the journey from Medina to Mecca. It was indeed a peaceful journey made for achieving peaceful results in the form of a *Hudaiybiya* peace treaty. One incident makes it clear that it was a march of peace, for during this march one Muslim uttered these words aloud: "Today is the day of fighting," the Prophet responded immediately, saying "No, today is the day of mercy." The fourth time the Qur'an uses *jihad* comes in chapter 22, "And strive in his cause as you ought to strive" (22:78). Here too *jihad* is used for struggle for the cause of God's religion. According to Farida Khanam in "Understanding Jihad," "Fighting and war came from another word, *qital*."⁸ *Qital* is to engage in war at the time of aggression on the part of the enemies. The *qital* or war is purely in self-defense in accordance with God's commandment, which also involves a struggle that came to be called *jihad* as well.

⁷ Kaltner, 120.

⁸ Farida Khanam, "Understanding Jihad," 12 Dec. 2005[online]; available from http://www.allahuakbar.net/JIHAAD/understanding_jihad_islam.htm,2.

A Islamic scholar, Majid Khadduri, asserts, "God enjoins all believers to slay the polytheists wherever they may be found until they believe."⁹ The verses of the Quran cited by the protagonists of this view in support of their stand are in Q2: 190-193, "Fight in the cause of God those who fight you; but do not transgress limits... There is no more tumult for oppression" (Q2: 217,246; Q9: 5, 13-14, 29,123). Commenting on the verse, which enjoins Muslims to slay the idolaters not on account of their religion, but on account of their (the idolaters') unruly behavior, M. M. Ali opines that in view of the clear exception given in verse 4 of chapter 9, the idolaters identified are the idolatrous tribes of Arabia assembled at the pilgrimage, who have made treaties with the Muslims, but later violated them, and not all idolaters of the world.¹⁰

The *Hadith* are the recorded sayings and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad. It is second in authority only to the Qur'an and is often used to clarify things not specified in the Qur'an. The following is what Muhammad had to say about *jihad* as recorded in the *Hadith*. "The second best deed is to participate in *jihad*" (vol.1, Bk. 2, No. 25, Narrated Abu Huraira): -

Mecca Allah's Prophet was asked, "What is the best deed?" He replied, "To believe in Allah and His Prophet Muhammad. The questioner then asked, "What is the next in goodness? He replied, "To participate in Jihad (religious fighting) in Allah's Cause." The questioner again asked, "What is the next (in goodness)?" He replied, "To perform Hajj (Pilgrimage to) Mubrur, (which is accepted by Allah and is performed with the intention of

⁹ Khadduri, 16-17. See Jacob K. Olupona, ed., "The Qur'anic Guidelines on Inter-Religious Relations: An Overview," in *Religion and Peace in Multi-faith Nigeria* (Ile -Ife, Nigeria: Printed by Obafemi Awolowo University, 1992), 83.

¹⁰ Muhammad Ali, ed. and trans. , *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text, with English Translation and Commentary* (Lashore, India: Ahmadiyyah Anjuman Isha'at Islam, 1963), 385. See Olupona, "Qur'anic Guidelines on Inter-Religious Relations, 86.

seeking Allah's pleasure only and not to show off and without committing a sin and in accordance with the traditions of the Prophet.¹¹

Muhammad said if someone leaves Islam, kill them (Volume 4, Book 52, Number 260, narrated by Ikrima). vol. 3, Bk. 46, No. 726 "Allah's Prophet said, A pious slave gets a double reward. Abu Huraira added: By Him in Whose Hands my soul is but for *jihad* (holy battles), Hajj, and my duty to serve my mother, I would have loved to die as a slave" (vol. 9, Bk. 93, No. 555). "Allah's Prophet said, Allah guarantees (the person who carries out *jihad* in His Cause and nothing compelled him to go out but *jihad* in His Cause and the belief in His Word) that He will either admit him into Paradise or return him with reward or booty he has earned to his residence from where he went out." The close connection of *jihad* with the struggle for justice is reinforced in the *Hadith*. One of the best known ways that a Muslim must strive to avert injustice is first by actions, and if that is not possible, by words, and if that is not possible, at least by intentions. In the *Hadith*, the second most authoritative source of the *shari'a* (Islamic law), *jihad* is used to mean armed action, and most Islamic theologians and jurists in the classical period (the first three centuries) of Muslim history understand this obligation to be in a military sense. Although the language in the Qur'an and *Hadith* is quite militant in many places, this is a reflection of the Muslims' world in the seventh century, which consisted initially of resistance to a variety of more powerful non-Islamic tribes and then successful military campaigns to spread the faith. Besides containing exhortations to fight, however, Islamic sacred texts have also laid out the rules for engagement of war, which include prohibitions against the killing of noncombatants such as women, children, the aged, and the disabled. These texts also require notice to the adversary before an attack, requiring

¹¹ Translation of Sahih Bukhari, Book 2, "Belief"; accessed 12 Apr.2006; available from http://www.isna.com/library/hadith/bukhari/002_sbt.html.

that a Muslim army must seek peace if its opponent does, and forbid committing aggression against others as well as suicide.

According to Sohail H. Hashmi in his article "Jihad," during the period of Qur'anic revelation while Muhammad was in Mecca (610-622), *jihad* meant essentially a nonviolent struggle to spread Islam.¹² Following his move from Mecca to Medina in 622, and the establishment of an Islamic state, fighting in self-defense was sanctioned by the Qur'an (22:39). At each place *jihad* has been used, the focus was in the sense of effort and strength and not the sense of war and fighting. The life of the Prophet Muhammad was full of striving to gain the freedom to inform others and convey the message of Islam. During his stay in Mecca he used non-violent methods and after the establishment of his government in Medina, by the permission of Allah, he used armed struggle against his enemies whenever he found it inevitable. Allah admonishes Muslims in the Qur'an: "And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and of those who, being weak, are ill-treated (and oppressed)? Men, women, and children, whose cry is: Our Lord! Rescue us from this town, whose people are oppressors; and raise for us from You, one who will protect; and raise for us from You, one who will help" (4:75). The mission of the Prophet Muhammad was to free people from tyranny and exploitation by oppressive systems. Once free, individuals in the society were then free to chose Islam or not. Prophet Mohammad's successors continued in his footsteps and went to help oppressed people.

¹² Sohail H. Hashmi, "Jihad," *Encyclopedia of Politics and Religion*, ed. Robert Wuthnow, vol.1 (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1998), 425-26; accessed 6 2005; available from http://www.cqpress.com/context/articles/epr_jihad.html.

In its literal sense *jihad* in Arabic simply means struggle striving to one's utmost to further a worthy cause. There is a difference, however between the word struggle and *jihad*. The word struggle does not connote the sense of reward or worship in the religious sense of the word. But when the word *jihad* became a part of Islamic terminology, the sense of reward or worship came to be associated with it; that is to say, if struggle is struggle in the simple sense of the word, *jihad* means a struggle which is an act of worship, the engagement of which earns reward for the person concerned. Inasmuch as *jihad* is a struggle, it is a struggle against all that is perceived as evil in the cause of that which is perceived as good. It is a struggle across time and all dimensions of human thought and action. Although *jihad* is improperly used by some fanatics and fundamentalist Muslims coupled with press propaganda, *jihad* is a healthy practice that deserves to be emulated in an interfaith community for the following reasons: it is rooted in the basic tenets of Islamic pillars, in the Qur'an and Hadith for spiritual growth, political and economical freedom, but also for peace, solidarity and love in the community. Living in an interfaith community is a way for each religion to demonstrate the tenets of their faith that make each religion distinct, attractive, and accommodating for peace, love, and spirituality.

From a spiritual point of view, some of the pillars of Islam can be seen as being related to *jihad* as a healthy practice in a community of faith. The first pillar of Islam states, "There is no divinity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah." This maxim is not only truth to Islam but also to Christianity and Judaism as a weapon for the practice of inner *jihad* in daily life, recognizing the divinity of God and that of God's messenger depending on who this messenger is in each faith. The daily prayers, which

constitute the form of the Islamic rites, are also a *jihad* that punctuates human existence in a continuous rhythm in conformity with the rhythm of the world. To perform the prayers with regularity and concentration requires the constant exertion of our will and an unending battle and striving against sin and laziness. It is itself a form of spiritual warfare applicable to other faiths. Also, the fast of Ramadan, in which one wears the armor of inner purity and detachment against the passions and the temptations of the outside world, requires an asceticism and inner discipline which cannot come about except through inner war. Giving of *Zakat* is another form of healthy practice in a community of faith because in departing from one's wealth a person must fight against the covetousness and greed of the carnal soul, and the payment of *Zakat* also helps in contributing to the establishment of economic justice in human society.

The term strive or struggle may be used by Muslims as well as non-Muslims in an interfaith community, because in our daily life we strive to achieve what is important to us. In this sense a student struggles and strives to obtain an education and pass course work; a worker strives to discharge his/her job and maintain good relations with his/her employer; a politician strives to maintain or increase his/her reputation with constituents. *Jihad* is a healthy practice because it is indeed a struggle to put Allah ahead of our loved ones, our wealth, our worldly ambitions and our own lives. *Jihad* is also a healthy practice when we read from the Qur'an, "So obey not the rejecters of faith, but strive (*jahidhum*) against them by it (the Qur'an) with a great endeavor" (25:52). When *jihad* is understood as having courage and steadfastness to convey the message of Islam, it is a healthy practice because it helps to convey the message of the Divine. In the Qur'an, Allah specifically praises those who strive to convey His message, "Who is better in

speech than one who calls (other people) to Allah, works righteousness and declares that he is from the Muslims" (41:33). *Jihad* as defending Islam and the community is a healthy practice since it encourages the defense of self, the community and the religion; which I believe is also applicable in other faiths. The Qur'an permits fighting to defend the religion of Islam and the Muslims. This permission includes fighting in self defense and for the protection of family and property. The early Muslims fought many battles against their enemies under the leadership of the Prophet Muhammad or his representatives. For example, when the pagans of *Quraysh* brought armies against the Prophet Muhammad, the Muslims fought to defend their faith and community. (22:39-40) *Jihad* is gaining freedom to inform, educate and convey the message of Islam in an open and free environment, Allah declares.

In the article "Jihad in Islam," the notion of *jihad*, in its primary signification has to do with a personal struggle against one's own evil inclinations and passions (*jihad-un-nafs*). *Jihad* has a great significance, in the lives of Muslims and is a healthy practice for the following reasons: 1) It is a sincere and noticeable effort for good, an all-true and unselfish striving for spiritual good. 2) *Jihad* involves change in one's self and mentality. It may concern the sacrifice of material property, social class and even emotional comfort solely for the salvation and worship of God alone. 3) *Jihad* involves noticeable effort for righteousness. This means that the effort concentrated in the *Jihad* is a step on the true and ultimate path of Islam (submission), the effort imposed on one's self. Thus *Jihad* is solely individual, self-centered and self-interested. This effort is only the doing of good for salvation and pardon of God. The Qur'an points this out in the following verse: (16:111; 3:30). 4) *Jihad* is to exceed in the sincere act of good deeds and the restraining

of the doing of sins" (to commit adultery, to steal, to lie, to cheat, to insult people, to gossip, etc.). 5) *Jihad* also includes the striving for, and establishing, justice.¹³

According to Jawad Khaki in "What are the basic teachings/tenets of your faith tradition," other forms of healthy practices in human struggle that have been mentioned in the Hadith literature are as follows: 1) *Jihad-un-nafs*, spiritual struggle for self-purification; 2) *Jihad-ul-lisan*; struggle to engage in a civil dialogue by way of the tongue; 3) *Jihad-ul-qalam*, intellectual struggle by the use of the pen; 4) *Jihad-ut-tarbiyya*, educational *jihad*; 5) *Jihad-ud-da'wa*, spreading the message of monotheism and servitude to God with wisdom and goodly admonition; 6) *Jihad bi-l-maal*, struggle to part with one's wealth to help in a humanitarian cause; 7) *Jihad bi-s-sayf*, military engagement for self-defense and self-preservation when all peaceful methods fail to achieve a resolution to the dispute.¹⁴

Jihad is a central and broad Islamic concept whose primary significance is in reference to spiritual purification that includes struggle against evil inclinations within oneself, struggle to improve the quality of life in society, struggle in the battlefield for self-defense or fighting against tyranny or oppression. However, it is recognized that there will be times in society where evil and mischief may arise. In such cases, Muslims are urged to defend themselves. Again, referring to the Qur'an, "Fight in the way of God against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! God loveth not aggressors" (2:190). *Jihad* as a healthy practice is an "effort against evil in the self and

¹³ "Jihad in Islam," accessed 14 Dec. 2006; available from <http://www.submission.org/muhammed/jihad.html>.

¹⁴ Jawad Khaki, "What Are the Basic Teachings/Tenets of Your Faith Tradition?" [online]; 14 Dec. 2006; available from <http://www.shianews.com/hi/articles/islam/0000160.php>.

every manifestation of evil in society." It is "being a better student, a better colleague, a better business partner. Above all, to control one's anger."¹⁵

In conclusion, *jihad* in Islam is striving in the way of Allah by pen, tongue, hand, media and, if inevitable, with arms. However, *jihad* in Islam does not include striving for individual or national power, dominance, glory, wealth, prestige or pride. The Qur'an and the Hadith, the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad, show how the notion of *jihad* differs distinctly from the notion of holy war against unbelievers as is commonly understood today by some militant Islamists, as well as their foes. *Jihad*, in its original sense, simply meant striving in the path of God. Such striving could take various forms. Helping the poor and the distressed could equally be a form of *jihad* as could defense of the community from hostile attacks. Indeed, jihad as war was originally intended as defense of the faith and the community in the face of aggression. In normal times, relations between Muslims and people of other faiths were intended to be peaceful, and violence the exception, rather than the norm.

Concept of "Jesus the Only Way to Salvation"

In Christianity the concept of "Jesus the only way to salvation" needs to be reconstructed. God sent Jesus Christ to die for all people (2 Cor 5:14), hence God's spirit brings salvation to all people regardless of their religious affiliation. The universalistic salvation holds such a conviction, claiming that the grace of Christ operates in and through other faith traditions whether the adherents of these faiths know and acknowledge Christ or not. Therefore, they argue, the followers of other religions do not necessarily have to become Christians and evangelization is not necessary. Jesus is the

¹⁵ Daniel Pipes, "What is Jihad," *New York Post*, 31 Dec. 2002; available from <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/990>.

one mediator of all humanity, says Paul: "This is good and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to know the truth. For there is one God, and there is one who brings God and mankind together, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself to redeem all mankind" (1 Tim. 2:3-6). In order to reconstruct this concept, other dimensions of Jesus need to be lifted up to help Christians live in peace with Muslims and peoples of other faiths. Christians can only live in peace with others by following the life and example of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Today when all the people in the world are in a frantic search for peace, the Christian proclaims that Jesus Christ is "the Prince of Peace." The Christian church confesses in faith that the prophecy was realized with the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lord. To understand what is meant, let us first turn our attention to the meaning of peace in the biblical sense.

The most common word in the Bible translated into "peace" is a Hebrew word "*shalom*." In examining the word *shalom*, first, the verbal form, *shalem*, means "to make whole" and derivatively "to bring to completion," "to complete," "to restore" and "to compensate." The following passage will suffice: "Thus all the work that King Solomon did on the house of the Lord (Jerusalem Temple) was finished (*shalem*)" (1 King 7.51). Second, the adjectival form of the word, *shalem*, means "whole" or "full." "A full (*shalem*) and just weight you shall have, a full (*shalem*) and just measure you shall have." (Deut. 25.15). Third, the noun form of the word, *shalom*, means, basically, "wholeness," "fullness," "totality," "completeness." When *shalom* is referred to in a communal context, it means the harmonious wholeness and unity of a community. The communal *shalom* is achieved and maintained through the realization of justice and righteousness in a community. As a Hebrew Psalmist sang, "righteousness and *shalom* will kiss each

other" in a community where *shalom* prevails (Ps. 85:10). There is no *shalom* in a society, no matter how peaceful and well-ordered on the surface, if justice is warped for the benefit of the powerful, and the poor and powerless are unfairly treated and their rights are disregarded and trampled upon. When the Christian church proclaims that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, it is not simply an affirmation of faith, but also a clear call to action. As faithful followers of the Prince of Peace, Christians are called to be "shalom-makers." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5:9). *Shalom* is not only a gift of grace restored for us through Jesus Christ, but also a task and responsibility entrusted to all who are rightly called "children of God." Peacemakers are not simply peaceable and peaceful persons; they are those who actively and earnestly endeavor to "make" peace, *shalom*, here and now. The church and Christians are called to be signs and instruments of *shalom* in this world still torn with strife and violence, warped with injustice and oppression, divided with enmity and hostility. Wherever *shalom* is broken and lost, such as in the Nigerian communities, that is where we can start to work. But, first of all, to be "shalom-makers" it is imperative that we make our *shalom* with God. The shalom-making is also defined in the prophetic writings of the Hebrew Bible in Isaiah 9:6, "For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace [sa shalom]'". There are numerous areas in today's world that call for our effort of *shalom*-making. Shalom is also a major part of the Messianic promise of future blessing that provides salvation on all people (Jer. 33:6-9) on which Jesus was standing.

It is important for the Christian church to work for the preservation and promotion of peace. At the same time, it is vitally important that the church lead the way for living in peace. Jesus called his followers “to love their enemies, to do good to those who hate them, to bless those who hurt them, and to pray for those who abuse them” (Luke 6.27-28). Christians are supposed to lead the way for all those persons who are denied their basic rights and are discriminated against because of their racial background, because they do not live in a world of *shalom*. That is, when a society is fragmented between the privileged and underprivileged, the powerful and powerless, there is no *shalom*. Or when political power is misused and abused for the benefit of the powerful, and the freedom of the common people is suppressed and curtailed arbitrarily, there is no *shalom* in that society. By following the Prince of Peace, the Christian church is to be alert to the cries of the oppressed, the victims of political, economic and social injustice and repression, and should work actively for the building of a society where justice and righteousness are fully realized for all, regardless of their social standing.

As followers of the prince of peace, Christians can be good examples of reducing sexual and inequality domination, since we are still living in a world of sexual discrimination and inequality. The domination of man over woman, and inversely the submission of woman to man, is not the created order of *shalom* but a telling sign of the fallen state of humankind. When Christians proclaim the coming of Jesus Christ as Good News, we celebrate the beginning of the victory of the new creation over the old “fallen” order. As St. Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, there is new creation” (2 Cor. 5.17).

In the life of Jesus, God invites Christians to become lovers of peace. Anyone can practice nonviolence; everyone is called to practice nonviolence. God would not have

invited us to this life of peacemaking if it were impossible. As Jesus revealed, God never calls us to violence even though the Bible is filled with violence in the name of God to destroy God's enemies, Christians who use violence have no justification for their behavior from Jesus Christ nor from his life and teaching rather have only betrayed Jesus Christ. Over the centuries the church has done a great disservice to God and humanity by blessing violence and warfare. The gospel is much stronger when it insists that nonviolence is not just an option, it is a commandment by Jesus to practice nonviolence.

The study of both religions has helped to understand that each religion has both peaceful legacies as well as roots that have been used to conquer in violent ways. I urge every body to focus on the peaceful legacies in regard to the state of Nigeria. In the next chapter will let us focus on models for peace and in deconstruction of exclusive theology.

CHAPTER 5

MODELS FOR FOSTERING PEACE

This chapter offers the proper way to foster peace through *Shalom* and provides the meaning of reconciliation and adequate steps toward reconciliation in order for the Nigerians to come and live together in peace and harmony.

As a religious educator, I notice that religion is unfortunately the primary source of contemporary violence in Nigeria. Violence in which individuals or groups claim a religious affiliation are implicated is a vile distortion of the noble and peaceful teachings of the true spiritualities of each religion. There is an urgent need to conscientize the church's members who are used as tools by religious and political leaders. They need to learn how to live in peace. Paulo Freire in *Breaking Free: the Transformative Power of Critical Pedagogy* defines conscientization as "the ability to analyze, problematize, and affect the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural realities that shape our lives."¹ When these church members are conscientized, they will be challenged to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence. They will relinquish any theological justification for violence, and they will affirm the spirituality of peace that seeks to address people's personal relationships with the divine, the earth, and the other.

In order to effect this change, since wars begin in the minds of persons, it is in our minds that the defenses of peace must be constructed. It is quite correct to arrive at the idea that humankind is capable of learning, the manner in which humankind can live peacefully together and of how preparations can be made for peace. The church can bring

¹ Paulo Freire and Donald P. Macedo, "A Dialogue: Culture, Language, and Race," in *Breaking Free: The Transformative Power of Critical Pedagogy*, ed. Pepi Leistyna, et al. (Cambridge: Harvard Educational Review, 1996), 199.

this reform through a resourceful and effective curriculum, planned to reshape the common life of the community of faith so that it is better able to teach and to nurture the members for peace. Peace is very important because it is the harmonious state of the spirit and the body of the individual and community that is politically, economically, socially, and environmentally good and beautiful. It means more than the absence of warfare or even the absence of physical violence.

To make such peace possible, peace education is needed to begin the process of fostering the creation of peace in Nigeria. Such education emphasizes the equality of humanity, love for others, respect for human rights and harmonious co-existence with nature. The power of peace cultivates and nurtures those cultural and social characteristics that transcend religion and spirituality. Thus, the understanding of human nature, science, and customs are key tools in comprehensive peacemaking. In my proposed curriculum, the goals are: 1) to learn from the spirituality and resources for peace building of one's own faith and other faiths, to work with other faiths in the pursuit of peace, and to challenge the churches or mosques to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies; 2) to build awareness and support for the introduction of peace education into all spheres of the church curriculum, 3) to help members understand some of the complex processes that lead to violence and conflict which in turn cause death, destruction and refugees to flee from their homes and from their countries of origin; 4) to cultivate attitudes that lead to a preference for constructive, active and non-violent resolution of conflict; 5) to help members develop the personal and social skills necessary to live in harmony with others and to behave in positive and caring ways that respect basic human rights. In order to carry out these

goals, people must be in a proper relationship with God, must create a space for hospitality, i.e., a place of respect, acceptance, attentive listening and mutual sharing of personal stories and experiences. It requires openness to the voice and experience of others, willingness to identify and make themselves visible and available to one another. It needs to expose various behaviors that have hindered the community in a peaceful coexistence. The practices of hospitality, encounter, compassion, passion, and *shalom* are effective and a holistic approach for carrying out these goals.²

Theology of *Shalom*

The task of peace education is preparation for action through the dissemination of peace knowledge. It facilitates learning for intervening in situations of violence, learning how to take action as responsible church members, but mainly learning how to use the skills and knowledge required for effective action. Proper peace education helps church members to form arguments based on sound social analysis and contextualized interpretation of their faith. It helps them to determine the types of policies and interventions that follow from those arguments, and, hopefully, opens the possibilities for them to take action.

In *A Many Colored Kingdom*, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier asserts that:

Shalom is a concept that cannot be captured, for it includes many dimensions: love, loyalty, truth, grace, salvation, justice, blessing, and righteousness. It is a biblical vision in which all of creation is one, every creature living in community and harmony with every other for joy and well being of all. Shalom is therefore a vision of connectedness for an entire community: young, elderly, rich, poor, Latino, Anglo, Native American, powerful and dependent³

² Conde-Frazier, chap. 8.

³ Conde-Frazier, 206.

Furthermore, the ideas of *shalom* and the kingdom of heaven go hand in hand in that they both hold something which is more than individual salvation and more than simple social peace. “*Shalom* at its most critical can function as a theology of hope, a large-scale promissory vision of what will one day surely be. As a vision of an assured future, the substance of *shalom* is crucial, for it can be a resource against both despair and an overly eager settlement for an unfinished system.”⁴

As Christians, the theology of shalom is more relevant in the Nigerian situation because it is based on the personal life of Christ, the prince of peace: the Prince of Peace calls his followers to seek peace in the world. The bond of peace among people is not a doctrine or philosophy or abstract idea but a Person, Jesus Christ, who has “broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:14) and who calls his people to carry on his work. Therefore the mission of the church must have the entire dimension and scope of Jesus. It consists in proclaiming and teaching, but also in healing and liberating, in showing compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. It also involves being sent into the world to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to save, and to liberate. In order for peace to reign, the concept of love (*Agape*) in 1Co. 13:13 must be considered.

Agape speaks of unconditional love, which is an attribute of God’s own heart, a kingdom value. *Agape* speaks of a love that exceeds passion, friendship and benevolence. *Agape* speaks of a love that goes beyond self, yet is more than an unselfish feeling. *Agape* speaks of a love that acts. *Agape* speaks of a love that loves the unlovable. The Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son explore what it is to love our neighbor, and give insights to *Agape* as a theme of mission. *Agape* is the indiscriminate love beyond

⁴ Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2001), 5.

discrimination without obligation, without lines of responsibility and exclusion; it responds to persons, not social categories. *Agape* is bold, suspends social and ecclesiastical norms which justify callous disinterest by penetrating social barricades that hold people in prisons, hospitals, addiction centers and ghettos of all sorts. *Agape* is inconvenient, risky, takes time, is expensive, and jeopardizes social status. *Agape* is courageous and aggressive, more than warm fuzzy feelings, more than good attitudes towards others. It doesn't stop with sweet smiles. *Agape* captures the significance of "Love your neighbor" (Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-27).

Jesus modeled *agape*. He embodied it by being an advocate for the poor. He violated civil and religious laws in the face of human need. His words and deeds insulted the rich and powerful. The mission of the church, then, has all the dimensions and scope of Jesus' own ministry, and may never be reduced to church planting and the saving of souls. It consists in proclaiming and teaching, but also in healing and liberating, in compassion for the poor and the downtrodden. The Church will only be faithful to Christ when it is engaged in peacemaking. The Church is obedient to Christ when it equips God's people as peacemakers. The Church bears witness to Christ when it nourishes the moral life of the nation for the peace of the world.

The task of peacemaking is not a peripheral one for the religions of the world. It is a calling or requirement that is at the heart of communities of faith. Indeed sacred texts of the world's religions have much to teach about the need for peacemaking. They also provide wisdom and insights about the nature of peace and the task of peacemaking.

The church as a reconciler, a peacemaker, needs to work on four attitudes and four skills of a peacemaker. The attitudes are: humility, commitment to the safety of

others, acceptance of conflict, and hope. The four skills are: truthful speech, expectant listening, alertness to community, and good process. While these skills and attitudes can be taught, they need to be lived. Within these skills and attitudes, the primary changes must begin where pastors and other church leaders are trained.

As a religious educator, in order to educate others, I need research and the gathering of data. Using the skills of social analysis will be helpful to outline the context in which a decision for action can be made. Social analysis according to Joe Holland, in *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice* can be defined as “the effort to obtain a more complete picture of a social situation by exploring its historical and structural relationships.”⁵ Holland goes further to explain that social analysis explores reality in a variety of dimensions; sometimes it focuses on isolated issues, such as employment, inflation, or hunger. At other times, it focuses on the policies that address these issues, such as job training, and monetary considerations.

Social analysis is a diagnosis, not a treatment. After I analyze the data, I synthesize it. My conclusion might be: It is neither tolerable nor necessary that we live in a world with poverty and war. We need an effective transformed society aspiring for peace, love and wealth. The social analysis will be a tool for arriving at how things are related structurally and personally. It can help identify what forces are moving to shape a situation, a person, or an institution. It can give an idea of where those forces are in conflict with each other and where powerless people can intervene and make a difference. It assumes a common goal: that people can all use skills, imagination, and creativity to decide how to shape their economic, political, and ideological situation.

⁵ Joe Holland, and Peter Henriot, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, rev. and enl. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1983), 14.

In my search for effective healthy practices in an interfaith community in Nigeria, I have discovered *The Ten Practices of Abolishing War*, which is the product of scholars who have collaborated to specify practical steps and to develop principles of a new critical approach to peacemaking. Rather than focusing on the question of how to stop war, Stassen and colleagues promote the theme of “fanning the flames of peace.” They challenge pacifists to be active peacemakers rather than trying to collect converts to pacifism. They also force just-war theorists to emphasize the steps before the last resort of violence, thus increasing the climate of peace.

I find it difficult to adopt “The Ten Practices of Abolishing War” because I think peace cannot really be achieved in Nigeria using the Stassen model. The necessary principle of just peacemaking is that both extremes of Christian ethical theory on war and peace, pacifism and just war theory miss an important point. Christians must not simply justify or oppose it, but should rather be engaged in the process of removing the contributing causes of war: injustice, intolerance, and poverty, which in Nigeria Christians cannot do alone, even if Stassen advocates that “each person can base these practices on his or her own faith.”⁶ Muslims will not agree to use such a model based purely on Christian principle. In addition, the turn the other cheek strategy has failed and has been used to promote violence instead.

The Gandhi model of peace that seeks and embraces peace in our lives and redirect anger into positive energy and actions may seem too dangerous when the violence is divinely based. This cannot be counted as an effective model because it will lead to the extermination of one’s faith. Nonviolence, according to Wink, is an alternative to both of the “natural” responses to evil: fight or flight. Jesus’ “third way,” as

⁶ Friesen, 5

Wink describes it, neither mirrors the violence of power as domination nor flees the scene in passive submission. The third way seeks rather to engage the “powers and principalities” with imaginative forms of civil disobedience, community organizing, and public ritual. These nonviolent means seek not simply to replace power with power but to move closer to the democratic ideal of the rule of law in which justice is built into the fabric of human arrangements, and where human flourishing is structurally insured for the greatest number possible.

Although Walter Wink sets high standards for those who wish to take up this cross, he fails to talk about what to do when you love your enemies and their aim is to exterminate you based on their religious belief. Will one continue to turn his cheek? Wink does not confront true evil very well. He does not address religious violence. He mentions terrorism, but he does so only vaguely in the context of nonviolent reaction, by not striking back with physical force. The concept of “turn the other cheek”⁷ already has been used by some Christians to defend themselves and be violent because the passage did not say what to do when you are been slapped on both cheeks; therefore I will not use this model for peace in Nigeria.

For me, the solution to violence in Nigeria must include the dissolution of various boundaries that keep the believers of Christianity and Islam feeling separated. Both sets of believers could experience how, when and where both religions are connected and disconnected, when they are in confluence or in conflict, and how to help turn obstacles into stepping stones on the way to harmony.

⁷ Walter Wink, *Jesus and Nonviolence: A Third Way* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 9.

Reconciliation

After reviewing the situation in Nigeria, and focusing on the future and how to avoid all atrocities in the future, I asked myself what would be an efficacious means for bringing the two religions together? The only perspective that comes to my mind as Christians is reconciliation. David Bloomfield in *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict: A Handbook* defines reconciliation as

An over-arching process which includes the search for truth, justice, forgiveness, healing and so on. At its simplest, it means finding a way to live alongside former enemies not necessarily to love them, or forgive them, or forget the past in any way, but to coexist with them, to develop the degree of cooperation necessary to share our society with them, so that we all have better lives together than we have had separately.⁸

Why is reconciliation the best way to deal with the issue in Nigeria? Because reconciliation has to be concerned with the future, it does not repeat the past. Also Joseph Liechty in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, affirms that “The work of reconciliation is a humble process, a road to be traveled together, and one step at a time, by those seeking to be reconciled..... the work of reconciliation projects itself into the future, opening up and concentrating on possibilities.”⁹ As a Christian, reconciliation is reflected in the epistle to the Colossians, in 2 Corinthians and in 1 John. God’s love and reconciliation are freely given and are not conditional. It is a difficult religious virtue that Jesus wants us to follow. The Bible also teaches us to love our enemies.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone

⁸ David Bloomfield, et al., *Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: A Handbook* [online]; accessed 14 Dec. 2006; available from. <http://www.idea.int/publication/upload/reconciliation>.

⁹ Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, “Reconciliation: An Intrinsic Element of Justice,” in *Explorations in Reconciliation: New Directions in Theology*, ed. David Tombs and Joseph Liechty (Aldershot, Eng.: Ashgate, 2005), 73.

takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Lk.6: 27-31)

In addition, “reconciliation as social virtue imposes the duty to overcome what separates humans beings, what turns one against another,”¹⁰ we have to move and grow in this changing world, because, according to Liechty “We always have to keep in mind, when looking at the past, that the passing of time makes retrieving it impossible, that who we are today is different from who we were in the past, who we were even in the recent past, even yesterday.”¹¹ This is why Schreiter asserts that “Any return is not a return: it is coming into a new place”¹² even though, the theology of reconciliation is ingrained in both religions in conflict in Nigeria. The process of reconciliation is defined by the online Wikipedia as “part of a process of restoring a relationship gone wrong, typically as the result of one party causing a rift, by putting an end to a relationship of enmity and by substituting one of peace and good will. This may be the relationship between individuals or between nations or between God and human beings.”¹³ The process of reconciliation is taxing and difficult. There is no easy way through this challenge, and therefore reconciliation must be about the future and not the past. The process becomes very complicated because religious difference has been the cause of social conflict in Nigeria. One of the challenges of reconciliation requires an interreligious effort to cooperate. This effort also makes reconciliation more difficult because the wrongdoer and the victim both believe they are fighting for God, and revenge is a stagnating force that makes future-oriented movement impossible. It also involves the unique conception of the past, the

¹⁰ Isasi-Diaz, 75.

¹¹ Isasi-Diaz, 82.

¹² Schreiter, 11.

¹³ Wikipedia, “The Process of Reconciliation,” accessed 2 Dec. 2007; available from <http://www.reference.com>.

specific feeling of hurt, anger, guilt, fear, shame, lack of trust, and misconception, that cannot be easily deconstructed. In order to curb further violence, one of the ways to approach reconciliation is to begin the process from the teaching of this concept and doctrine in each religion. In Christianity the way God begins with the victim and not the evildoers should be the example for Christians to emulate. In *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies*, Robert Schreiter explains that “God begins with the victim, restoring to the victim the humanity which the wrongdoer has tried to wrest away or to destroy. This restoration of humanity might be considered the very heart of reconciliation.”¹⁴ Reconciliation does not come easy because a lot of suffering has been caused, and many walls have been built. It is not just a political struggle, it is psychological, personal, and spiritual. Jesus made the move to restore our relationship with God; he didn't wait for us to do it. The same must be done by Christians. The gospel stories of Jesus' passion and death, the way he was betrayed, humiliated, tortured, and executed is a good example to express how we must act in the face of violence. These stories can help Christians to place their own sufferings and humiliations inside that of Jesus; they have a powerful effect for Christians and are windows into God's activities in the world. Christ had a way of turning the tables on the world by stressing love, honesty, justice, diligence, active caring for others, and reconciliation. Jesus made it clear that the relationship with one's neighbors was the key sign of the health of one's relationship with God (Matt. 5: 21-24). In order to understand the value of reconciliation, conflict must first be valued, because the absence of conflict is more often a sign of injustice and oppression than of peace. In “Apostle of Conflict and Agents of Reconciliation” Alan Geyer affirms that:

¹⁴ Schreiter, 15.

Conflict is not always and everywhere a Bad Thing. Conflict is the source of vitality and creativity in all human beings and communities. Without conflict, you would be dead. Without conflict, a government is stifled, an economy suffocates, a religion dies. Conflict is inevitable and necessary. Conflict is the precious gift of a gracious God. Conflict testifies to the freedom of all the children of God. Yet conflict can also become the perversion of the freedom and the destroyer of life itself. It can be a crippler of the mind and a corrupter of the spirit. It can kill the world.¹⁵

In the context of Christian–Muslim interaction, the use of the Christian scriptures as a resource in conflict and post-conflict situations for reconciliation to take place, several notions must be considered. Christians have to confess the way they treat those who spread views other than their own as if they were demons. The way angers are allowed to fester instead of turning those energies to service. The actions taken due to fear or self-interest instead of love. The building of walls instead of bridges.

Steps to Reconciliation

Even though religion plays a part in conflicts, reconciliation often has religious roots: through religion people often come to understand that they are part of a greater whole and realize that they must work at restoring good relationships with others in situations of deep conflict, and especially after direct conflict has ended. There is no short cut or simple prescription for healing the wounds and divisions of a society in the aftermath of sustained violence. Creating trust and understanding between former enemies is a supremely difficult challenge. It is, however, an essential one to address in the process of building a lasting peace. Examining the painful past, acknowledging it and understanding it, and above all transcending it together, is the best way to guarantee that it does not and cannot happen again. Reconciliation cannot be imposed from outside, nor

¹⁵ Alan Geyer, “Apostle of Conflict and Agents of Reconciliation,” in *The Maze of Peace: Conflict and Reconciliation among Nations*, ed. Alan Geyer (New York: Friendship Press, 1969), 114-15.

can someone else's map get the affected community to its destination: it must be the solution of the community. This involves a very long and painful journey, addressing the pain and suffering of the victims, understanding the motivations of offenders, bringing together estranged communities, trying to find a path to justice, truth and, ultimately, peace. Reconciliation is a long-term process and it must and will continue for many years to come. The heart of the reconciliation process is to acknowledge both the pain and humanity of the other, and according to Desmond Tutu in *No Future without Forgiveness*, is "for the perpetrators or their descendants to acknowledge the awfulness of what happened and the descendants of the victims to respond by granting forgiveness providing something can be done even symbolically to compensate for the anguish experienced,"¹⁶ find out the truth about the horrors of the past, to ensure that they never happen again. Reconciliation, though not easy, is the most effective way to address the broken relations. It is a process through which a society moves from a divided past to a shared future. It takes time. And it takes its own time: its pace cannot be dictated. It is also a deep process: it involves a coming to terms with an imperfect reality which demands changes in our attitudes, our aspirations, our emotions and feelings, perhaps even our beliefs. Such profound change is a vast and often painful challenge, which cannot be rushed or imposed.

Pastors must be aware that living in a community affected by religious violence, reconciliation is not going to come as a result of eloquent rhetoric or high-level communiqués. It will come through communal effort and other members of the community taking millions of small steps in the right direction. The role of ministers is to find ways to bring peace, in finding the real causes of violence in the community.

¹⁶ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 278-79.

Andreas D'Souza in his chapter “Reconciliation in Practice: India experience” explains that “Reconciliation cannot take place unless our efforts toward it begin with an understanding of the root causes of violence and its endemic and spiral nature.”¹⁷ In addition, the church can move from evangelism to reconciliation by engaging in interfaith dialogue, studying and understanding Islam and other religions in the community, and working toward the removal of misunderstanding and suspicion in order to promote justice and peace. The church can change its proselytism method based on the “great commission” and learn how to build the kind of peaceful healing community found in Luke 4:18. The church needs to understand that the process of reconciliation is not: 1) an excuse for impunity; 2) only an individual process; 3) in opposition to/an alternative to truth or justice; 4) a quick answer; 5) a religious concept; 6) perfect peace; 7) an excuse to forget; 8) a matter of merely forgiving. But the process of reconciliation is: 1) finding a way to live that permits a vision of the future; 2) the (re) building of relationships; 3) coming to terms with past acts and enemies; 4) a society-wide, long-term process of deep change; 5) a process of acknowledging, remembering, and learning from the past; 6) voluntary and cannot be imposed.

The church needs to study the following goals of Islamic education enumerated by Michael Merry in “Islamic Philosophy of Education and Western Islamic Schools” as great tools in understanding Islam and moving through reconciliation. These goals are:

1. Prepare and train the future generation to work as agents of *Allah* on Earth.
2. Ensure the promotion of *Ma'rif* (good) and the prevention of *Munkar* (evil) in a society.
3. Ensure the balanced growth of the total personality of a person.
4. Promote spiritual, moral, cultural, physical, mental, and material development

¹⁷ D'Souza, “Reconciliation,” 261.

in children in preparation for the responsibilities, experiences, and opportunities of adult life.

5. Develop all the faculties needed to realize the full potential of people.
6. Develop all the skills required to enable people to face real life situations with a clear consciousness about their responsibility and accountability in the *Akhira* (Life after death)
7. Prepare people to work toward the economic and material growth of a society with a strong sense of the unity of the human race to ensure equitable distribution and proper use of wealth.
8. Develop a sense of social responsibility for the efficient use of resources to eliminate waste, avoid ecological damage, and safeguard the well-being of all created beings.
9. Encourage competition in good things to promote excellence and the highest achievements for the greater welfare of people and society.
10. Ensure that children grow up with a strong belief in sharing opportunities, equity, justice, fair play, love, care, affection, selflessness, honesty, humility, integrity, and austerity.¹⁸

In addition, the church needs to explore “the Islamic approaches to conflict resolution” described below by George Irani, and understand the Muslims understanding and approach to reconciliation and how those can be used in the reconciliation process in the community.

- *Communally* oriented process; individuals are enmeshed in webs of relationships.
- *Community* legitimizes *arbitration/mediation* through respect for age, experience, status, and leadership in communal affairs.
- Preferred third party as an unbiased *insider* with ongoing connections to all parties
- *Community and village elders* (the *jaha*) legitimize and *guarantee* the process of acknowledgment, apology, compensation, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
- Language and ritual of reconciliation draws freely on explicit *religious* ideals, texts, stories and examples.

¹⁸ Merry, 47.

- Precedence of *local history and custom*, encompassing relationships between kinship groups, and shared norms and values.
- Process manifests concern with cultivating the established “*wisdom*” gained through collective experience.
- Process is *continuity-oriented*: history is a source of stability and guidance that presents lessons for shaping a common future.
- Efforts are intended to *empower individuals* in relation to the legal system, gaining control over their problems while achieving greater efficiency.
- Efforts are intended to *empower families and the community* to participate directly in matters of common concern.
- Third parties promote direct, collaborative, step-by-step *problem solving* to isolate and confront discrete issues.
- Third parties emphasize the need to *restore harmony and solidarity* and *secure cooperative relationships*.
- Emphasis on honor, face, dignity, prestige, just compensation, and respect for *individuals and groups*.
- Intervention to *prevent conflict escalation* and disruption of communal symbiosis in a context of scarce resources.
- Process completed with a powerful *ritual* that includes *sulh* (settlement), *musalahah* (reconciliation), *musafaha* (exchange of handshakes), and *mumalahah* (breaking bread together)¹⁹

The church needs to use all these Islamic resources along with the Christian reality of reconciliation defined by Dieter T. Hessel in *Reconciliation and Conflict, Church Controversy Over Social Involvement* so as to: Transform the world by the radical power of love. Expose sin and injustice, arousing repentance; Lead to conflict as well as to overcoming it; Create confidence to pursue human freedom. Direct the church’s social response²⁰ God’s reconciliation work is in Jesus Christ and the mission of reconciliation to which Jesus calls his church. Before the church engages in dialogue after doing all diligent preparation, there is a need to send the following questionnaire to the leaders of other faiths.

¹⁹ George Irani, “The Islamic Approaches to Conflict Resolution,” 17 March, 2007 [online]; available from <http://www.ciaonet.org/>.

²⁰ Dieter T. Hessel. *Reconciliation and Conflict: Church Controversy over Social Involvement* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 31.

1. What are the root causes of conflict in our community?
2. What does our faith teach us about peace and living in peace with our neighbors?
3. What is reconciliation according to our faith, and how can we define reconciliation in our context and in our community?
4. If our community has been underdeveloped, and our children jobless, why do we fight each other and make our situation worse?
5. What are our roles and responsibilities in each conflict?
6. What can help each of us to reduce conflict in our community?
7. What will be our future if reconciliation does not occur?
8. How do we work out our differences and live in peace?
9. What are commonalities?
10. Does each religion include elements that lead to conflicts?
11. How do we accommodate our faith in our culture?
12. What are our strengths / weaknesses in building a peaceful coexistence in our community?
13. What have we learned in this conflict?
14. How can we become honest but not offensive? Righteous but not self-righteous? Prophetic but ready to reconcile with others?
15. How can injustice and inequality in its many forms be brought into the open in our community?
16. How can we be aware of violence in ourselves and reduce it?

These are guiding questions each group needs to meditate on for the beginning of an effective reconciliation process in order to reflect, assess, and understand the real

situation in their community and come out with critical views. As ministers in our community we need to understand that in practice reconciliation is not easy to realize. The experience of a brutal past makes the search for peaceful coexistence a delicate and intricate operation. Reconciliation is not an isolated act, but a constant readiness to leave the tyranny of violence and fear behind. It is not an event but a process, and as such, usually a difficult, long and unpredictable one, involving various steps and stages. Each move demands changes in attitudes, in conduct, and in the institutional environment.

Replacing Fear by Non-Violent Coexistence in the Community

The responsibilities of pastors are to initiate or sustain programs for promoting communication. Or, as symbolic representatives of victims and offenders, they can initiate dialogue if those directly involved are not yet ready to talk. The first step away from hatred, hostility and bitterness is the achievement of non-violent coexistence between the antagonist i.e. individuals and groups. This means at a minimum looking for alternatives to revenge. The move toward such coexistence requires first of all that victims and perpetrators be freed from the paralyzing isolation and all-consuming self-pity in which they often live. This involves the building or renewal of communication inside the communities of victims and offenders and between them.

Building Confidence and Trust in the community

The second stage in the process requires that each party, both the victim and the offender, gain renewed confidence in himself or herself and in each other. It also entails

believing that humanity is present in every man and woman; an acknowledgement of the humanity of others is the basis of mutual trust and opens the door for the gradual arrival of a sustainable culture of non-violence. This will be followed by the willingness to listen to the reasons for the hatred of those who caused their pain and with the offenders' understanding of the anger and bitterness of those who suffered.

The church and its leaders should always try in every process for only one ingredient in reconciliation, truth-seeking but with a recognition that they may be multiple truths. Truth-telling is not only a pre-condition of reconciliation because it creates objective opportunities for people to see the past in terms of shared suffering and collective responsibility, but more important is the recognition that victims and offenders share a common identity, as survivors and as human beings, and simply have to get on with each other. The church leaders should engage in direct dialogue with their Muslim counterparts. They must bring to the table the answers to the questionnaire distributed to each of them to address the issues at hand. In addition, they must bring supportive Qur'anic verses such as: "The Believers are a single Brotherhood; so make peace and reconciliation between your two brothers: and fear *Allah*, that ye may receive mercy" (Qur'an, Sura 49:10); *Allah* fills with peace and faith the heart of one who swallows his anger, even though he is in a position to give vent to it. (Qur'an, Sura 42:37); and Christian verse in 2 Corinthians "So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:20). These passages will explain the divine necessity of reconciliation. This dialogue will not only foster openness but bring understanding of differences not based on confrontation and exclusion. Furthermore, there is a need to embrace a spirituality of

reconciliation in order to practice reconciliation towards each other and live out the true spirituality which is described by Josien Folbert in “A Blueprint for the Process of Peace and Reconciliation” as “Concern for others and respect for life, commitment to social justice in a spirit of service, empowering people, removing social and economic inequalities and developing a new tolerance for others.”²¹

The church needs to be engaged in projects such as educating dropout children, teaching skills such as tailoring, catering for the jobless and healing ministry for the broken-hearted. This special ministry must comprise a trained nurse, a pastor and an *Imam* for the physical healing and the spiritual healing of the community, the role of the health ministry must be for referral and spiritual care.

The churches and the mosques in the community must organize daily prayer for peace in the community, for the healing of its members, and for mending a broken relationship in the community. In addition, a space must be created for the community to come together and share their stories about their family background, struggles, achievement pains, experiences, difficulties and blessings in order to see the commonality in every family, and the need to come together for a brighter future.

After fostering various religious peace methods and analyzing ways of bringing reconciliation in the Christian and Muslim context in Nigeria, in the next chapter, I will outline a curriculum that will facilitate peace teaching in the church.

²¹ Josien Folbert, “A Blueprint for the Process of Peace and Reconciliation,” in *Religion, Conflict and Reconciliation: Multifaith Ideals and Realities*, ed. Jerald D. Gort, Henry Jansen, and Hendrik M. Vroom (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), 379.

CHAPTER 6

DESIGNING CURRICULUM

This chapter focuses on designing an effective curriculum outline for congregations in order to facilitate the teaching of peace education. This curriculum outlines everything needed to address violence prevention in the church and in the community.

In order to effectively teach and implement the following healthy practices: honest communication in the community; quarterly multi-religious prayer; understanding our personal gifts; acceptance of others and respect for differences; engagement in dialogue; healing ministry in the community; annual interfaith celebration; workshops on peace education; and spiritual retreats. I am designing a curriculum dealing with these healthy practices to help religious leaders. For this curriculum to be resourceful and effective to the church, it must be redefined in my context. Such a curriculum will incorporate peace education in all its ramifications, to the creation of peace in Nigeria. Such education emphasizes oneness of humanity, love for others, respect for human rights, and harmonious co-existence with nature. The task of peace education is preparation for action through the dissemination of peace knowledge. It facilitates learning to intervene in situations of violence, learning how to take action as responsible, but mainly learning how to use the skills and knowledge required for effective action. Good peace education helps to make arguments based on sound analysis and contextualized interpretation. It helps to determine the types of policies and interventions that follow from those arguments, and hopefully, opens to them the possibilities to take action.

Peter F. Oliva takes a methodical, comprehensive, step-by-step process of curriculum development based upon a core of key models and basic concepts. He addresses both the technical details and the human dimension of the art of curriculum planning, the philosophy and aims of education, curriculum implementation strategies, and appropriately evaluating instruction.

Elliot W. Eisner defines curriculum as "a program that is intentionally designed to engage students in activities or events that will have educational benefits for them." The coverage is grounded in the belief that the appropriateness of any given educational practice is dependent upon the characteristics and context of the school program, and the values of the community that program serves.

Iris V. Cully asserts, "Curriculum includes both materials and the experiences for learning. The textbook or manual is the starting point, but enrichment books, filmstrips, recordings, and workbooks are other elements. Some people would include all the experiences of a learner as part of curriculum. Attending Sunday worship is such an experience and could well be integrated into the curriculum"¹

According to Maria Harris, curriculum is about "the mobilizing of creative, educative powers in such a way as to 'fashion a people'."² The five different curriculums used within the church according to her are as follows: *Koinonia*, which is Community, *Leiturgia*, which is Prayer, *Didache*, which is Teaching, *Kerygma*, which is Proclamation, and *Diakonia*, which is service. She also asserts that curriculum has multiple meanings, and in some instances the meanings are in conflict. She limited

¹ Iris Cully. *Planning and Selecting Curriculum for Christian Education* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1983), 11.

² Harris, 8.

herself to five challenging influences that contributed to the understanding of curriculum. Two are from general education and three from church education. These are presented in the Fred Newman and Donald Oliver essay that examines the missing community in most people's lives, and suggests that the contexts for education are very limited. They advocate a broader educational context as the only one suitable for genuine learning, with the corollary curricular principle that what occurred in such contexts could and did constitute curriculum.

In order to bring a resourceful and effective curriculum to the church, curriculum must be redefined in my context. It is a curriculum that will bring changes and transformations in the claims of each of the two 'foreign' religions Islam and Christianity, which have invariably resulted in a state of antagonism because of their doctrine of expansion rather than interaction. Islam and Christianity both have exclusivist beliefs that thwart any attempts of interaction. Christianity claims to be the way, the truth and the life exemplified by the person of Jesus Christ. Islam claims to be the only religion handed down from God through the great Prophet Muhammad, who they claim is the final Prophet of God.

Thus defining curriculum as support materials can lead a church into two errors. The first is believing that a curriculum is bought, not designed. The second results in believing that high-quality materials naturally lead to effective learning. Therefore, I have defined curriculum as the course of learning activities designed to accomplish well-defined goals.

Attaining good curriculum for our church is not easy. It is not available from a publishing house or a seminary. Good curriculum is the product of a local congregation's

fervor to meet the spiritual needs of its community and of the skilled leadership of staff in designing the course. Since we learn all the time through exposure and modeled behaviors, this means that we learn important social and emotional lessons from everyone who inhabits the community, from the Christians, the Muslims, the other religions, as well as from the non religious people. Many educators are unaware of the strong lessons imparted to our members by these contacts.

Model of the Bible Study in the New Curriculum

Children Bible Study Outlines

Objectives: At the end of a year children between the ages of 6 to 7, in the church will be able to learn the concept of kindness through the life of Jesus. They will be able to understand that kindness is vital, and is an interpersonal skill that is used daily in our relationships at home, at work, and in the community. Through kindness we give and receive, and we begin to understand that we are intrinsically connected to those around us.

Resources:

Films dealing with kindness, cartoons dealing with kindness, literature of kindness, Bible, hymnbooks, materials for drawing and costumes for role-play.

Plan

The following themes are suggested for each month, and at the end of each lesson a song dealing with kindness will be sung from the hymnbook.

January: Define the word kindness.

Discuss and define the meaning of kindness and what are the acts of kindness? Kindness is one of the characteristics of God's people.

Ask the following questions: Are you kind? Are you kind to people you don't know?

Are you kind when it costs you something? What about when you have to go out of your way? Are you really kind, or do you just say that you are kind?

Kindness is doing things for others, motivated by a true sense of concern and not merely a sense of duty or obligation. We are all familiar with "random acts of kindness." As educators for peace, the question that challenges us is, Acts of kindness involve caring for strangers and people far from us that we know are there but we can't see them. They are distant because they are far and because we may never see them or know their names. . . . or animals . . . all plants and the earth.

February: Examples of Kindness

Before starting the new topic ask the kids to name the type of kindness they have offered during the week, and to whom it was offered. List some of the many things which the Scriptures regard as exemplifying kindness.

One is kind when:

1. the person is honest in his dealings (Genesis 21:23)
2. the person rewards good received from another (Genesis 40:14)
3. the person is sympathetic and comforting (Job 6:14)
4. the person exhibits honorable behavior (Ruth 3:10)
5. the person shares another's burdens (1 Samuel 15:6)

6. the person shows friendship (1 Samuel 20:15, 16)
7. the person honors the dead (2 Samuel 2:5)
8. the person is merciful toward his enemies (2 Samuel 9:7)
9. the person demonstrates loyalty (2 Samuel 16:17)
10. the person shows gratitude (1 Kings 2:7)
11. the person has compassion (Jonah 4:2)
12. the person is benevolent (Luke 6:35)
13. the person is courteous (Acts 27:3)
14. the person is hospitable (Acts 28:2)
15. the person is forgiving (Ephesians 4:32). We can broaden our perception of kindness and its importance.

March: Kindness in the family and community

Remind the kids the type of kindness learned in the previous lesson and ask them to name three of them.

Discover what our families, and churches are doing in the community.

Internalizing Kindness

Children must learn kindness experientially. Children must experience both giving kindness and receiving kindness in the church. By having or showing a tender, considerate and helping nature. Thus, one who is kind is friendly, generous, warmhearted, sympathetic, considerate, gentle, affectionate and forbearing. e. g. by welcoming, directing, guiding, and helping new comers in the church, by giving out our space for elderly persons; by volunteering in church, by visiting the needy and the sick.

Demonstrate healthy ways to express needs, wants, and feelings. Make sure what we say to others is showing love and kindness.

Discuss the importance of showing respect for all people. The Scripture clearly indicates that a distinguishing mark of Christian believers is the quality of their human relationships. It is in the spirit of Christ to love and accept one another, to seek to affirm and empower, and to protect the vulnerable and disadvantaged. This must be done regardless of gender, age, ethnicity, social, economic, and health status. Children must respect everybody. Parent must show love and care to all kids.

Parents in the church should be involved.

April: Developing the sense of Community

Ask the kids to share how they are demonstrating kindness in the church and at home.

Kindness activities and projects develop a sense of community among the children. They will assemble themselves around this common theme that allows their creative ideas to find expression. Story of Ruth and Naomi: children will have fun gathering goodies and care cards for their moms, just as Ruth gathered food for herself and Naomi.

Teach also how to love from the heart. Identify community helpers such as crossing guards, firefighters, police officers, etc. Discuss how their jobs help the community.

May: Daily Practices of kindness

Ask the kids to identify people in the community whom activities demonstrate kindness.

Help Children Develop the Habit of Kindness.

Teach the children to become proficient at kindness, until kindness becomes part of who they are.

Teach the children to help someone who needs assistance or encouragement.

Teach the children to pass kindness on. When we do kind things for people, they feel so good about what we did that they often do kind acts for others. Kindness makes life much better.

June: Expressing Kindness

Ask the children to think about a time when they hurt someone's feelings by being unkind and then rewrite the situation with a different outcome.

Ask the students to pick two people who have done something nice for them. Have them write letters of appreciation, explaining how those people have made a difference in their lives.

In relation to peace education, kindness predisposes children to build, create, and keep peace. Acts of kindness create an environment in which escalating disputes and destructive conflicts cannot take root. For example create a very short story and have children respond. For example: Idriss, a Muslim neighbor is riding his bike. He falls off, hurts his knee, and starts to cry. What could we do to help him?

Kindness plays a role in acts of mediation and resolution of differences. Kindness presupposes an effort toward perspective-taking. The "kind thing to do" is an important solution to disputes. Teach kids to live in friendship in church and in their neighborhood: Discuss at group time how we know people are friends (e.g., they smile at each other, help each other, hold hands).

July: Kindness Quotes

Ask the kids to share their relationships with their neighbors.

Locate various quotes about kindness. Place them around the room and discuss what they mean. Children can memorize or illustrate their favorite quote.

“If anyone is in need, just lend a hand and help them out.” Anonymous

“Kind words do not cost much. Yet they accomplish much” by Blaise Pascal.

“Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.” By Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

“Forget injuries, never forget kindnesses.” By Confucius.

“Kindness is more than deeds. It is an attitude, an expression, a look, a touch. It is anything that lifts another person.” By C. Neil Strait.

“Be nice and smile to everyone you meet. You don't know what they are going through, and they may need that smile, and treasure it.” By Christine M. Huppert.

“Kindness is like sugar, it makes life taste a little sweeter.” By Carla Yerovi.

“Power is the ability to do good things for others.” By Brooke Astor.

Children 10-12 can illustrate or discuss how these verses can be applied in their daily life: at home, at school, in their neighborhood.

August: Kind People in the Bible

Study kind people in the Bible. Then have the children illustrate their kind works and discuss how their chosen path affected the world.

September: Act of Kindness

Have children share about a time they did an act of kindness for someone and how it felt.

Younger children can draw a picture and tell about it. Teach the children to write a nice note to someone in the church who is having a bad day.

Kindness Banner: Make a large banner and invite children to draw pictures about kindness on it.

Ask the children to start practicing the acts of kindness but not to tell anyone until the end of the week, when they can share their experiences with the entire class on Sunday.

October: Pledge

Teach children this pledge:

I pledge with the help of God to myself,

To try to be kind in every way.

To every person, Christian and non Christian.

I will help them if they fall.

When I'm kind to others and myself too,

That is the best that I can do.

Ask each child how they want to be treated? Write down all kindness words: Love, care help, etc. and ask them to treat others the way they want to be treated.

November: Kindness in the New Testament

Explore kindness quotes from Jesus

Discuss Jesus' life and his kindness to humanity.

December: Jesus Christ.

Story of kindness towards Jesus- by the shepherds and the magi. compare to the lack of kindness around the events of his birth.

Teach children to respond to others with kindness in words and actions until kindness becomes spontaneous. Children can offer words of comfort and affirmation to others, and demonstrate kindness by standing up for another who is being teased or by acting as a mediator in a conflict. Even young children are able to choose peaceful words when acting and speaking in a proactive way against physical or verbal abuse. Kindness can be a large effort, like the Kindness Walk for Pets project, or a small act in everyday life as simple as smiling at the checkout person at the grocery store. Let us practice kindness openly and often.

Youth Bible Study Outlines

Objectives: At the end of a one-year Bible study, youth should be able to identify the blessings of living in peace, of loving their neighbors and enemies as God loves us all, and becoming peace advocates in church to share in God's work to save the world. Peace advocates in church know what happened to the body of Christ in the world and still want to be part of the body of Christ in the world. They should be able to understand the theology of tolerance and correct the sense of superiority which religions, certainly not excluding Christianity, have repeatedly shown to be one of the greatest obstacles to the human cohabitation of different religions within the community, as is increasingly the case in our day. They should be able to move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivations for interreligious dialogue, for those inter-religious activists who have long campaigned that

inter-religious solidarity should be accorded a more prominent place in the programs of the church. As our society is wracked with violence and war, Jesus' saying: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. 5:9), "Love your enemies, pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44) and James saying "the harvest of justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace" (James 3:18), be memorized, understood and applied.

Resources:

Films dealing with violence at home, in school, community, church and in the world.

Cartoons dealing with violence, computer games dealing with violence. Pictures of wars, religious violence, hooliganism, and other violence.

Symbols of peace, films on peace, poems on peace, books on peace, Bible, Qur'an, Hebrew Bible, hymnbooks, materials for drawing and costumes for role-play.

Plan

The following themes are suggested for each month.

January: Violence

Exodus 15:3 - "The Lord is a man of war"

Numbers 31 - We see God actively sending Israel to war against other nations.

Explain how the idea of God as a violent punishing war monger is all part of the historical and cultural conditioning and that we can ignore it in good faith, especially in the light of the New Testament.

Teaching on Proverbs. 3: 16 there are seven things that the Lord hates and cannot tolerate:

A proud look
a lying tongue
hands that kill innocent people
a mind that thinks up wicked plans
feet that hurry off to do evil
a witness who tells one lie after another
someone who stirs up trouble among friends

Proverbs 19:19.

February: Causes of Violence

In order to understand the causes of violence, there is need to reflect on why there are so many conflicts and violation of human rights among religions in Nigeria.

Today participants in the destruction of life in Nigeria are adherents of faiths that advocate peace for all. That is of Christian, Muslim and African indigenous religion.

Lack of peace in Nigeria causes untold suffering to God's creation comprising humanity and the environment. The situation also hinders human development and the attainment of prosperity. The causes of violence are: systematic injustice, no rule of law, law as applied discrimination, religious bigotry and poverty. Oppressive structures, such as patriarchy and legal structures that are not applied uniformly become obstacles to the attainment of peace. Such obstacles are found in all institutions in a society, the family, politics, church, school, and economics.

The following questions will be answered by the participants: Is there violence at your school? If yes, what kind of violence? Have you or one of your friends ever had to deal with violence yourself, physical or mental? How did you deal with it?

What can you do to stop violence in your school and create a more peaceful environment for everyone at your school? Role play can be used.

What changes have to happen in school? How can you implement some points of peace from your school into the church? Have you had the experience of religion violence?

What are the implications in our lives and in our community? Bring newspapers reporting violence and its implications.

March: Peace Colossians 1:17-22

What is peace?

The biblical concept of peace

Study a bible passage dealing with peace and comment. Peace within the Social context.

Peace is a greeting, entailing more than just "how are you?" (Romans 1:7). God wants His children to live in peace, which is one of His great blessings Psalm 29:11, and the peace He provides defies comprehension. Philippians 2: 6-7. There is human responsibility in pursuing peace, but we are not to seek it the way the world does.

Genuine peace does not come from achieving greater success or acquiring more money; rather, it is the overflow of godly living (Psalm 34:12-14). Peace can be compared to a tripod, each leg of which is necessary for stability. First, there must be peace with God, which occurs at the point of salvation (Colossian 1: 20).

Second, we must have inner peace (John 7: 38).

Third, we are to pursue peace with other people. (Mathew 5: 9)

If a single component is missing, we will not experience the totality of God's intended blessing.

Questions for Reflection:

How can Christ help overcome factors in your life that might hinder your personal peace?

April: Different types of peace

From this month we will discuss various types of peace. There are many types of peace:

Inner peace, family peace, and community peace. The benefit of peace should be emphasized. When there is no peace there is no physical development or prosperity in the community. Foreign investors will not be interested in investing in such a community.

The creativity of the people is eroded. Bring the example of two different communities: One lives at peace and assesses their development and the inputs of investors, the other one lives in chaos due to violence; assesses their development and the investors' inputs.

Peace Within

Inner peace and balance are of great importance in everyone's life. They are highly valued by most people, though really few possess them. Yet, everyone can develop them, some more, some less.

What do inner peace and inner balance mean?

They mean the presence of self-control and discipline and the ability not to let outside events influence our emotions, actions and reactions. Their presence means the possession of common sense and good judgment, and of not letting the outside world shake our inner world. What is the cause of so much unhappiness in this world? What

deprives so many of inner peace? Is it not things like immorality, thefts, and murder? Is it not things like coveting, deceit, envy and pride? Such things destroy families, friendships, and property. What then is the cause of these things? (Discuss these first in groups)

Return from groups to share and conclude with the insights of Mark and James passages.

Jesus declared that the source of all these things to be the sinful hearts of men: (Mark 7:21-23)

James, the Lord's half-brother in the flesh, concurred with this diagnosis: (James 4:1-2) How many times have you been overwhelmed by emotions, lost your temper and got angry or impatient? How many times have you regretted your reactions or attitude?

May: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Pursue Peace with other People: Matt. 5: 9

The youth and young adults should be reminded that God is one and the Father of all humanity. This understanding calls upon all humanity to co-exist as brothers and sisters of one household by virtue of sharing a father.

Life is derived from one source, is sacred and seeks fulfillment (John 10: 10) for all people. If education on the fatherhood of God is taught and understood by all people, there will be attempts to handle others in a more humane manner than is the case today.

The current poverty does not only deny Africans peace but also divides God's household into the rich and poor. God does not discriminate (Rom. 2:11) (Gal. 2:6) and God has no favorites (Act. 10: 34). Therefore, Christians as Children of one Father are invited to show similar universal love to all Matt. 5: 43-48 Gal. 3:28. There are many other elements in our behavior that come into play when we talk about peace and how it is achieved and

maintained: forgiveness, caring, sharing, positive communication, tolerance, citizenship, embracing diversity, cultural unity, caring for all living things, individuality, freedom, and so much more....youth learn about all of these a little bit at a time, every single day from interacting with family, their educators and the world around them. Learning to live in peace is an ongoing process of education. Have the youth name the values they wish to see their community live by these values and ways to learn to live this way. They can name the ways they have learned some of them already. They can also design one way to help their community become intentional about a set of values. They should also be able to name barriers to maintaining such values and ways to overcome them. This gives them an appreciation for long term process and the need for intentionality in the process.

June: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Teaching on love

Jesus' principle of love that transcends all borders in Jesus' ministry, Jesus served all people irrespective of their backgrounds, such as the Samaritan woman, to manifest his unconditional love (John 14:9). We have to emulate Christ our Savior by striving for harmonious relationship with all people rather than applying the discriminatory tendencies based on religion. Help youth identify discriminatory practices in their community, in their country. How can these be worked on? How did Jesus strive for a different type of relationship? What do we see in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman? How can this be a part of our lives?

July Teaching on Dialogue

Dialogue among Christians and adherents of other faiths of the world.

Many religious traditions have the blood of millions of people on their heads for failing to teach peace education. All religions believe in a peaceful co-existence with the world as a means of demonstration of love for God. The fact that Christianity and Islam have been involved in violence in the past was due to misunderstanding rather than to the teaching of their Scriptures that emphasize peaceful co-existence through tolerance. Teaching on values of unending love through acts of God: neighborliness, devout life, humility, hospitality and justice is needed.

August: Justice and forgiveness

Principles of upholding justice to promote human dignity and respect for humanity, emphasize punishment that people received in the Bible for violating human dignity; the punishment of Cain for shedding innocent blood of Abel (Gen. 4).

Explain how God shows respect for humanity even in the punishment.

How does God treat the perpetrator with dignity and respect?

Read some genocide stories based on lack of forgiveness and ask if it is what we want to do. If yes what are the benefits of such actions; if no, what do we have to change? Further explain the position and teaching of Jesus on "Eye for eye."

Education on forgiveness Luke 11: 24, Matt. 5: 23-25, John 4: 20.

If we could forgive one another, peace will be.

September: Peacemakers Commitment Mat 5.

It is time to clearly recognize that in the end, violence is not a solution, but more often the problem. Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith.

We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus. As youth who are disciples of Jesus we are called to build a peacemaking church that constantly prays and teaches, speaks and acts for peace. Therefore with our parishes and people, we need to join in: Regular prayer for peace. Every liturgy must be a call to and celebration of peace. Have the youth create liturgy for peace. Help them understand the call for peace that God brings to their lives at this time. How will they respond to it. How might they live and respect each other to live into that call. The cause of peace should be constantly reflected in our prayers of petition. The scriptural call to peacemaking should be a constant source for prayer and preaching. Sharing the Gospel call to peace and the Church's teaching on peace. Speaking and acting for peace.

October: Action for Peace

Plant a tree of peace at your home, school, workplace or place of worship as a symbol of peace and hope for future generations.

In order to understand how others children are working for the sustenance of peace, they will share their hopes and ideas about peace for the children of the world with each other. Learn more about peace and peacemaking programs and reports from United Nations at your public library.

November: Prayer for Peace

Youth are called to reflect on this prayer and write their personal prayer on peace. They will also incorporate the lessons they have learned about peace in the prayer as appropriate.

To you, Creator of nature and humanity, of truth and beauty, I pray:

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of the victims of all wars and religious violence among individuals and nations.

Hear my voice, for it is the voice of all children who suffer and will suffer when people put their faith in weapons and war.

Hear my voice, when I beg you to instill into the hearts of all human beings the wisdom of peace, the strength of justice and the joy of fellowship.

Hear my voice, for I speak for the multitudes in every country and every period of history who do not want war and are ready to walk the road of peace.

Hear my voice, and grant insight and strength so that we may always respond to hatred with love, to injustice with total dedication to justice, to need with sharing of self, to war with peace.

O God, hear my voice, and grant unto the world your everlasting peace. Amen

The youth are called to reflect on this blessing and write their own blessing.

A Peace Blessing

May God banish from our hearts whatever might endanger peace.

May God transform us into witnesses of truth, justice and love.

May God enlighten the rulers of peoples so that in addition to their solicitude for the proper welfare of their citizens, they may guarantee and defend the great gift of peace.

May God enkindle the will of all, so that they may overcome the barriers that divide, cherish the bonds of mutual charity, understand others, and pardon those who have done them wrong.

May all peoples of the earth become as one, and may the most longed-for peace blossom forth and reign always among them.

December: Jesus and Nonviolence

For the celebration of Christ's Birth the three examples of Jesus on nonviolence in Luke 6: 29-30 will be role played to end the class.

The effective implementation and teaching of these healthy practices in interfaith community will develop among Muslims and Christians harmonious relations in the 21st century. While maintaining their differing religious identities, they can show the world that they share respect for God and that they believe that human conduct should follow the Divine will. For these practices to also be effective, there should be a joint commitment of Muslims, Christians and other citizens to justice, development, sound economic programs, honesty in private and public life, and willingness on the part of the rich to show serious solidarity with the poor. Peace stands on the pillars of love, truth, development, justice and solidarity.

Adult Bible Study Outlines

Objective: at the end of a year of teaching the adults will be able to grow beyond self-centeredness, to examine prejudice and hatred with the purpose of beginning a process of abandoning harmful values. They will seek to promote understanding and compassion for the Natural World, to stop the continuation of revenge, wherever it appears, to look for ways to make a living which do not eliminate the chance for life of other species or human beings, to offer personal talents and resources for the benefit of the suffering in the world as well as for the benefit of self, family and friends. They will

seek to help others who are finding ways for practical and sustainable living on the earth and to live in peace. They will seek to teach peace to everybody.

Resources:

Films dealing with violence in community, church and in the world. Cartoons dealing with violence. Pictures of wars, religious violence, and other violence.

Symbols of peace, films on peace, poems on peace, books on peace, Bible, Qur'an, Hebrew Bible, hymnbooks.

January: What is Peace? Colossians 1:17-22

The biblical concept of peace

Ask each participant to define peace and its importance. Study a bible passage dealing with peace and offer comments. God wants God's children to live in peace, which is one of God's great blessings (Ps. 29:11), and the peace God provides defies comprehension (Phil. 2: 6-7). There is human responsibility in pursuing peace, but we are not to seek it the way the world does. Genuine peace does not come from achieving greater success or acquiring more money; rather, it is the overflow of godly living (Ps. 34:12-14). Peace can be compared to a tripod, each leg of which is necessary for stability. First, there must be peace with God, which occurs at the point of salvation (Col. 1: 20).

Second, we must have inner peace (John 7: 38).

Third, we are to pursue peace with other people (Matt. 5: 9).

If a single component is missing, we will not experience the totality of God's intended blessing.

Different types of Peace

There are many types of peace: Inner peace, family peace, and community peace. The benefit of peace should be emphasized. When there is no peace there is no physical development or prosperity in the community. The foreign investors will not be interested in investing in such a community. The creativity of the people is eroded. Brings the example of two different communities: One living at peace and assess their development and the inputs of investors, the other one in chaos due to violence and assess their development and the investors' inputs.

What is Peace Within?

Inner peace and balance are of great importance in everyone's life. They are highly valued by most people, though really few possess them. Yet, everyone can develop them, some more, some less.

What do inner peace and inner balance mean?

They mean the presence of self-control and discipline and the ability not to let outside events influence our emotions, actions and reactions. Their presence means the possession of common sense and good judgment, and of not letting the outside world shake our inner world. What is the cause of so much unhappiness in this world? What deprives so many of inner peace? Is it not things like immorality, thefts, murder? Is it not things like coveting, deceit, envy and pride? Such things destroy families, friendships, and property. What then is the cause of these things?

Jesus declared that the source of all these things to be the sinful hearts of men (Mark 7:21-23).

James, the Lord's half-brother in the flesh, concurred with this diagnosis (James 4:1-2).

How many times have you been overwhelmed by emotions, lost your temper and got angry or impatient? How many times have you regretted your reactions or attitude?

February: Violence and its Causes.

In order to understand the causes of violence, there is need to reflect on why there are so many conflicts and violation of human rights among religions in Nigeria.

Today participants in the destruction of life in Nigeria are adherents of faiths that advocate peace for all. That is of Christian, Muslim and African indigenous religion.

Lack of peace in Nigeria causes untold suffering to God's creation comprising humanity and the environment. The situation also hinders human development and the attainment of prosperity. The causes of violence are: the systematic injustice, no rule of law, the law is applied discrimination, religious bigotry and poverty. Oppressive structures, such as patriarchy and legal structures that are not applied uniformly become obstacles to the attainment of peace. Such obstacles are found in all institutions in a society, the family, politics, church, school, and economics.

The participants will answer the following questions: Is there violence at your place of work/ home? If yes, what kind of violence? Have you or one of your friends/ family member ever had to deal with violence yourself, physical or mental? How did you deal with it?

What can you do to stop violence in your home /place of work and create a more peaceful environment for everyone?

How can you implement some points of peace from home / place of work into the church? How many had the experience of religion violence? What are the implications in

our lives and in our community? Brings newspapers reporting about violence and its implications.

March: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Pursue Peace with other People: Matt. 5: 9

People should be reminded that God is one and the Father of all humanity. This understanding calls upon all humanity to co-exist as brothers and sisters of one household by virtue of sharing a father.

Life is derived from one source, is sacred and seeks fulfillment (John 10; 10) for all people. If education on the fatherhood of God is taught and understood by all people, there will be attempts to handle others in a more humane manner than is the case today. The current poverty does not only deny Africans peace but also divides God's household into the rich and poor. God does not discriminate (Rom 2:11, Gal. 2:6) and God has no favorites (Act 10: 34). Therefore, Christians as Children of one Father are invited to show similar universal love to all (Matt. 5: 43-48, Gal. 3:28). There are many other elements in our behavior that come into play when we talk about peace and how it is achieved and maintained: forgiveness, caring, sharing, positive communication, tolerance, citizenship, embracing diversity, cultural unity, caring for all living things, individuality, and freedom. Learning to live in peace is an ongoing process of education. Have the participants named the values they wish to see their community live by and ways to learn to live this way. They can name the ways they have learned some of them already. They can also design one way to help their community become intentional about a set of values. They should also be able to name barriers to maintaining such values and ways to

overcome them. This gives them an appreciation for long term process and the need for intentionality in the process.

April: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Teaching on love

Jesus' principle of love that transcends all borders in Jesus' ministry, Jesus served all people irrespective of their backgrounds, such as the Samaritan woman, to manifest his unconditional love (John 14:9). We have to emulate Christ our Savior by striving for harmonious relationship with all people rather than applying the discriminatory tendencies based on religion. Help participants identify discriminatory practices in their community, in their country. How can these be worked on? How did Jesus strive for a different type of relationship? What do we see in his dialogue with the Samaritan woman? How can this be a part of our lives?

Teaching on Dialogue

Dialogue among Christians and adherents of others faiths of the world.

Many religious traditions have the blood of millions of people on their heads for failing to teach peace education. Because all religions believe in a peaceful co-existence with the world as a means of demonstration of love for God. The fact that Christianity and Islam have been involved in violence in the past was due to misunderstanding rather than to the teaching of their Scriptures that emphasizes peaceful co-existence through tolerance.

Teaching on values of unending love through acts of God neighborliness, devout life, humility, hospitality and justice is needed.

Introduce comparative religion in church to enable people to realize that they hold similar views. Teach the basic tenets and doctrines of Islam, and Judaism.

May: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Educating on justice and forgiveness

Principles of upholding justice to promote human dignity and respect for humanity emphasize punishment that people received in the Bible for violating human dignity punishment of Cain for shedding innocent blood of Abel Gen 4. Explain how does God show respect for humanity even in the punishment. How does God treat the perpetrator with dignity and respect?

Read some genocide stories based on lack of forgiveness and ask if it is what we want to do, if yes what are the benefits of such actions, if no, why do we want to change? And further explain the position and teaching of Jesus on “Eye for an eye.”

Education on forgiveness: Luke 11: 24, Matt. 5: 23-25, John 4: 20.

If we could forgive one another, peace will be.

Peacemakers Commitment Matt. 5

It is time to clearly recognize that in the end, violence is not a solution, but more often the problem. Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith.

We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus. We are called to build a peacemaking church that constantly prays and teaches, speaks and acts for peace. Therefore with our parishes and people, we need to join in: Regular prayer for peace. Every liturgy must be a call to and celebration of peace. Have the youth create liturgy for peace. Help them understand the call for peace that God brings to their lives at this time. How will they respond to it how might they live and

respect each other to live into that call. The cause of peace should be constantly reflected in our prayers of petition. The scriptural call to peacemaking should be a constant source for prayer and preaching. Sharing the Gospel call to peace and the Church's teaching on peace. Speaking and acting for peace

June: Different Ways of Living in Peace

Action for Peace.

Plant a tree of peace at your home, school, workplace or place of worship as a symbol of peace and hope for future generations. Think deeply about how your daily activities contribute to the making of justice, the building of community and the betterment of our culturally violent world. As a Christian, explore its teachings about peace. Picture peace. Imagine peace. Pray for peace.

Make a new friend and renew your friendship with a friend, family member, neighbor or co-worker you have fallen away from. Share your hopes and ideas about peace for the children of the world with everyone you meet. Learn more about peace and peacemaking. Invite your community to participate in the Peace Pole dedication ceremony, including children and senior citizens, representatives of various faith communities and/or ethnic groups, schools, clubs, scouts and local media. Community leaders and clergy love to be asked to make speeches.

Have the peace messages on the Pole read in the four different Nigerian languages by designated individuals with a connection to each language or culture.

July: Promoting Tolerance and Peace in Children

People who are angry or frightened often feel that the ability to "fight back" puts them more in control or will alleviate their sense of pain.

While anger is a normal response felt by many, we must ensure that we do not compound an already tragic situation and react against innocent individuals with vengeance and intolerance.

Children, in particular, may have difficulty channeling their feelings appropriately, and can easily pick up negative or demeaning cues given by adults around them. Parents need to be prepared to quickly and effectively prevent and intervene in the presence of abusive behaviors toward any child. Such behaviors can only further the risk of violence in life.

Adults can help children understand the importance of treating all people with dignity and not judging *groups* of people by the actions of a few.

Most importantly, adults must model kindness, tolerance and compassion in their words and behavior. They should also encourage children to explore their feelings about prejudice and hate. Doing so is not only critical to preventing further harm, but the process presents a potentially powerful opportunity for our young people to learn and incorporate into their values the true strength of our country, our commitment to individual freedom and upholding the respect and dignity of all people.

Ask each participant to name ways and expressions of tolerance in their homes.

Ask victims of various abuses to have private discussion on how they can be helped.

Ask perpetrators of abuses to have a different section in order to help them also.

August: Religious Tolerance.

Learn from the following passages: Mark 9:38-40; Luke 9:49-50 what does Religious

Tolerance mean and how Christians can apply it in their daily life. In addition, use the following teaching to broaden their understanding of tolerance.

Jesus refused to curse non-believers: Luke 9:52-56.

Jesus treats a Samaritan woman with respect: John 4: 7-27

Toleration of fellow Christians: Romans 14:1-23.

Avoid offending followers of other religions: 1 Corinthians 10:31-32.

September: Effect of Intolerance

Bring various articles reporting about religious violence in the Nigeria, ask the participants to analyze the various causes of the violence reported in their articles. Try to explore the major role in intolerance and explain its effects in: 1) in the home, 2) in the church, 3) in the community.

Study the Effect of Intolerance against Jesus Christ, Followers of Jesus, Fellow Christians and Non Christians. What can we do to bring change and peace in our own time?

October: Nonviolence according to Jesus

Read the following passages and Matt. 5.38-41; 1 John 3.15; Mark 10.18 Matt. 25.42-43,45-46; Luke. 6.27-28 and explain what Jesus was teaching, how we can apply the teaching to our situations and context. Try to answer the following questions: Why was Jesus agianst violence? Was God happy with violence?

Discuss about the value of non violence. Talked about Jesus' life and teaching and each participant to bring way they can be committed to a non violent lifestyle.

November: Living a Christian life at home

Talk about how to avoid violence and hate in the home. Bring practical suggestions on how violence can be avoided. Explain that non-violence does not mean passive about injustice and defense of the rights of others, it rather affirms and exemplifies what it means to resist injustice through non-violent methods.

Teach how to be just and defend injustice at home, church and community.

Teach love and care at home and how these influence the life of our children.

Teach the importance of Jesus' Love and how to emulate Jesus' Love in the Christian home.

December: Devotion on Peace

Ask each participant to prepare a morning/evening family devotion on peace/kindness. Each participant will have a 10 minute presentation after which the group will bring their inputs. After every participant has presented and received feedbacks, they will go and do the necessary correction of their presentations, after which these presentations will be collated as a devotional book.

After a year of teaching the above curriculum outlines, the church needs to come together and talk about the current state of peace in our home, church and community. Assess the role each member played in the sustenance of peace, and how to move on if there is a positive change or what to do/ with new ideas for a peaceful living.

CHAPTER 7

HEALTHY RELIGIOUS PRACTICES TOWARDS PEACE

This chapter seeks to offer various healthy practices for peace in the Nigerian interfaith community that will reduce violence, teach people to live in peace, and offer the healing power of love as a remedy. These practices will emphasize ways to treat others with filial piety, fraternal love, loyalty, trustworthiness, and humanity; in order to coexist with others courteously, justly, honorably, and peacefully. This chapter is divided into nine sections: 1) Honest communication in the community; 2) Quarterly multi-religious prayer; 3) Understanding our personal gifts; 4) Acceptance of others and respect for differences; 5) Engagement in dialogue; 6) Healing ministry in the community; 7) Annual interfaith celebration; 8) workshops on peace education; 9) spiritual retreats.

As the church's leaders are praying towards living in peace in the community, they need to engage their neighbors in a one on one conversation that will allow them to think and talk about the future and the development of the community. I believe that issues of poverty are an area that could bridge the gap between the two faith groups since poverty is not selective. The two faiths could come up with a joint strategy on addressing the issues facing the poor and what the government could do to alleviate the situation. This will lead to the formation of an interfaith relations committee. The mission of such a committee will be to promote mutual understanding, respect, appreciation and cooperation among people of faith in the community through extending hospitality, offering educational opportunities, providing moral leadership, sharing in service and working for justice. Its vision will be to promote mutual understanding, appreciation, and respect among the region's diverse religions and cultures; to honor each other's religious

festivals and, where appropriate, share together in common prayer; to seek opportunities for conversation, partnership, education, hospitality and celebration among its members; to address concerns and pursuing common goals that impact the religious communities; provide moral leadership on mutually agreed-upon issues; to serve poor, hungry, homeless and marginalized people; to foster peace, compassion, kindness, openness and trust; and to encourage one another in embracing these commitments. The committee will work towards the implementation of the following religious practices in the community, by emphasizing six points enumerated by Patrice Brodeur:

1. Avoid proselytizing through practicing the “golden rule”: “listen to others as you would like them to listen to you.” Encourage in particular the open articulation of the needs of each individual and religious community.
2. Avoid confusing the aim of understanding and respecting the needs of each individual and religious community with agreement.
3. Seek the best possible sharing of responsibilities across the participating religious communities, building on the various strengths of the respective organizing and participating individuals and communities.
4. Respect each organizer’s voice in building consensus, even though various degrees of commitment will soon emerge among the various organizers. More involvement should not translate into more weight in the process of decision-making.
5. Practice fair time-management during both the planning sessions and the celebration itself; no individual or religious community should have more time than others to speak or make their own contribution.
6. In case of tensions, reviewing the initially-agreed-upon guidelines, whether individually or as a group, should help find solutions that will avoid frustrations and feelings of being forced into unwanted decisions¹

¹ Patrice Brodeur, “Description of the Guidelines for Interfaith Celebration,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34:4 (Fall 1997): 571-72 [journal online]; accessed; available from from www.masscouncilofchurches.org/docs/INTERFAITH.htm.

First Healthy Practice: Honest Communication in the Community

The solution to violence is the dissolution of various boundaries that keep the believers of the two religions feeling separated. Both believers in both religions must know how, when and where both religions are connected and disconnected, when they are in confluence or in conflict, and how to help turn obstacles to harmony into stepping stones on the way. In order to dissolve these barriers, both religions need to communicate clearly, to be aware of what their feelings, thoughts and concerns are and make them clear to others without projecting them on others. In addition, the knowledge of other religions is the first requirement if one hopes to build relationships that will be respectful and fruitful. Goodwill is necessary, but it is not enough. A planned study of the other religion is required if interreligious relationships are not to stagnate at the superficial level of generalizations, clichés and prejudices. Those who are in positions of responsibility or leadership in each religion have a greater obligation than their co-religionists to undertake a deeper study of the religion. This will be put in practice by discussing the following subjects at meetings: What are the core values and how can we nurture them in each faith tradition? How does each faith tradition recognize their prejudices and how can they move beyond them? How do you discern your unique talent, gifts, contributions, and how are you called to serve the world and your community? Is forgiveness essential in each religion? How does one express' gratitude in one's life? What does each tradition teach about reconciliation?

As a practice and a lifestyle, nonviolence encourages us to witness the ways we treat ourselves and to see them reflected in the ways we interact with others. Through this honest communication, one can explain how the idea of God as a violent punishing

warmonger is all part of the historical and cultural conditioning of the author and that we can ignore it in good faith. We ought to rather teach the seven things that the Lord hates and cannot tolerate: A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that kill innocent people, a mind that thinks up wicked plans, feet that hurry off to do evil, a witness who tells one lie after another, and someone who stirs up trouble among friends.

Second Health Practice: Quarterly Multi-religious Prayer

The purpose of the quarterly week of prayer is for interfaith understanding, lifting the work of interfaith organizations, dialogues, and problems affecting the community. When praying, speak in your own language and idiom, just as others will when it is their turn. Whenever possible and not contrary to ones tradition, model inclusion in prayer. Instead of referring to the deity only as “he” or “father,” use a variety of names such as God, Allah, Yahweh, Spirit, Creator, Source of All Being, Ultimate Reality, Gracious One, The Almighty, Ruler of the Universe, etc. For our prayer not to be imposed on others and become problematic, alternative endings for prayer may include “in your name ... in the name of God” or simply “Amen.” For Christians who find it necessary to end their prayer with Jesus’ name, instead of ending a prayer with “We pray these things in Jesus’ name” consider “I pray in Jesus’ name.” During this week of prayer, faith communities would be encouraged to lift up educational forums, pulpit exchanges, and youth group exchanges with a faith community from another tradition.

Third Healthy Practice: Understanding Our Personal Gifts

A workshop must be organized for the leaders in the community to understand each person and the gifts each person brings in the community, and the nine types of the

Enneagram² will be used. According Helen Palmer the enneagram “is an ancient Sufi teaching that describes nine different personality types and their interrelationships. It is part of a teaching tradition that views personality preoccupations as teachers, or indicators of talent abilities that unfold during the development of higher consciousness.”³ They also will take this workshop to their local community to help each of their members understand their gifts, which include: the peacemaker, the perfectionist, the helper, the achiever, the romantic, the observer, the questioner, the adventurer, and the asserter.

Fourth Healthy Practice: Acceptance of the Other and Respect for Differences

Furthermore, the acceptance of the other and the respect for differences must also be applied to break those barriers. Correct information about the other will show Muslims and Christians that their two religions do share many beliefs. Examples are belief in one God, mighty and merciful; acceptance of the role of prophets, and belief in the eschatological realities of judgment, reward and punishment. There are nevertheless fundamental differences. For Christians, belief in the Trinity and the Incarnation completely transform the relationships between God and humankind. For Muslims, the place given to the Qur'an as final revelation and the role given to Muhammad as the seal of the prophets puts a special stamp upon Islam. In order to practice dialogue, individually or collectively, church or mosque can create a space for hospitality, i.e., a

² The Enneagram Explorations, *Enneagram Test and Instinctual Subtypes Test* [online] are based on over 30 years of combined study and research in the fields of personality testing and the Enneagram. Through extensive trials the Enneagram test and the Instinctual Subtypes test have been shown to be highly accurate in determining both Enneagram Type and Instinctual Subtype. These testing instruments combine both traditional testing inquiry with the cutting edge use of archetypal visual imagery and key words used by each Enneagram type found through extensive research. Available from <http://www.enneagram.net/etests/etestpurchase.html>.

³ Helen Palmer, *The Enneagram: Understanding Yourself and the Others in Your Life* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 1.

place of respect, acceptance, attentive listening and mutual sharing personal stories, experiences, there should be no conversion. This requires openness to the voice and experience of others, willing to identify ourselves and make ourselves visible and available to one another, by the acceptance of others, and dealing with the social pressure of each faith and the problems confronting both Muslims and Christians in the community. When Muslims and Christians come to know one another and learn to respect and accept one another, they are well poised to engage in some form of Muslim/Christian dialogue. In addition, setting up of dialogue by a local ecumenical council involving Christians and Muslims from a range of backgrounds should be introduced. Christians and Muslims should come together, not only to talk to each other, but to work together for the common good. Christians and Muslims should express their desire to move beyond theological discussion into the “dialogue of engagement.” The churches and their members should pursue a better understanding of Islam; encourage both conversation and cooperation, to defend the civil rights of Muslims, to reject religious and political demagogues.⁴

Fifth Healthy Practice: Engagement in Dialogue

If Muslim-Christian relations are not to remain an academic exercise, openness to others and readiness to engage in some form of cooperation is expected of a sincere Muslim or Christian. The community members should always be in discussion, and discover first what is right in the contributions of others; they shall be able to integrate and mediate. No member of the community should ever use their positions egotistically;

⁴ Jane I. Smith, *Muslims, Christians, and the Challenge of Interfaith Dialogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 15.

they shall be met with respect. They should learn never to offend or disappoint; and always create a good climate. Building interfaith communities is a solution that responds to the challenge of living peacefully. Thus, creating interfaith communities will prepare each religion for dialogue with others, so that all human beings are worthy in the sight of God. Such interfaith communities will facilitate the participants' exploration of the basic tenets of what they believe and will recognize borders in preparation for crossing them. This will include agreeing to disagree. The interfaith communities will work together for the good of all. To put this in practice, permanent housing or shelter will be provided. In a context where housing is an urgent problem, and if housing is not an urgent problem whatever urgent need the community is facing should be given priority, this can become a critical component of the interfaith continuum of care. All participants living in interfaith housing will participate in programs designed to help them strengthen skills to live stable, independent lives, and at affordable prices for families. Also, an Interfaith Communities Technology Center/ Computer Lab will be provided for easy networking within the community. Interfaith community services should provide the tools necessary for people to reach optimum self-sufficiency. The participants will work with the homeless, hungry, and undereducated. Through its continuum of care, interfaith effort will be able to provide food, clothing and shelter, but also career training and counseling, childcare, and physical and mental health care. Interfaith communities and their affiliates will change Nigerians' hearts one at a time.

Teaching dialogue: dialogue among Christians and adherents of other faiths of the world. Many religious traditions have the blood of millions of people on their heads for failing to teach peace education. All religions believe in a peaceful co-existence with the

world as a means of demonstration of love for God. The fact that Christianity and Islam have been involved in violence in the past was due to misunderstanding rather than the teaching of their Scripture emphasis on peaceful co-existence through tolerance. Teaching the values of unending love through neighborliness, devout life, humility, hospitality, and justice. Introduce comparative religion in church to enable people to realize that they hold similar views. Teach the basics tenets and doctrines of Islam and Judaism.

Sixth Healthy Practice: Healing Ministry in the Community

Another way to bring the community together is through health ministry in the community. The purpose of this ministry is to help the community care for one another, to help attain, maintain and/or regain the best possible whole person's health, namely wellness of body, mind, and spirit. In an interfaith community, the local church / mosque must be raised to offer the spiritual, interpersonal, emotional and physical health of members in the community. This will be done through the help of health professionals and other interested lay members. The health ministry committee or cabinet will be composed by the pastor, the Imam and a nurse. They will combine their knowledge and experience with their willingness to serve, and then respond to the unique needs of their congregation and the community. Their role may include health education, health counseling, a referral source, and facilitating and integrating health and healing in the community.

Seventh Healthy Practice: Annual Interfaith Celebration

The interfaith celebration will bring people of various religious faiths together in order to share with one another parts of their respective sacred traditions (reading, story, prayer, meditation, chant, testimony, dance, and more). It will provide for each participant a meaningful experience of how diverse religious people can come together to share their respective understanding and reactions to a common theme. The interfaith celebration will be made up of two elements: people and communication. Members of various religious traditions (people) come together in order to share some aspects of their religious traditions with one another and beyond (communication). This may include the public in attendance at the celebration, the broader public reached through the media, specific individuals or groups of people on whose behalf prayers may be directed, and a divinity or all-encompassing source of power or reality. This annual interfaith celebration will be best practiced in conjunction with other kinds of multireligious activities, not as an isolated case of multireligious cooperation.

The interfaith celebration is not neutral. The very concept implies an openness to see religious diversity as something positive. Therefore, the interfaith celebration can be seen as a possible sociopolitical tool in the promotion of more tolerant and pluralistic societies. The purpose for holding the interfaith celebration will vary according to the circumstances that bring the organizers together. The only common denominator is the desire to celebrate together religiously, whatever form and content this intention may eventually reach. The interfaith celebration will serve only a limited number of ends. For example, organizers and participants might come to express a public concern for a given theme, through one's own religious sensitivity, so as to effect change in the direction

promoted by the theme; share treasures from one's own religious tradition as a tool for education; gain more factual knowledge about each other's traditions; gain more insight into the sensitivities of each other's religious communities; gain appreciation for different expressions of religious and spiritual worship; develop acquaintances and friendships with people across traditional religious. The content of the interfaith celebration may include music and food. In terms of music, special attention needs to be paid to each tradition. As for food, it is one of the most powerful symbols to which all human beings must relate in order to survive. The choice of food during an interfaith celebration should follow a specific guideline that will allow everybody to partake in the meal.

Eighth Healthy Practice: Workshops on Peace Education

In order to teach healthy practices effectively, a workshop will be organized for youth and leaders to enable them to identify the blessings of living a religious pluralism and in loving their neighbors and enemies as God loves us all, and to become peace advocates in church and mosque to share in God's work to save the world. According to Bernard Haring, there is need of "Self-education for nonviolence and an all-encompassing change of education."⁵ After the workshop, they should be able to understand the theology of tolerance and correct the sense of superiority which is one of the greatest obstacles to the cohabitation of people of different religions. In addition, they should be able to move from extrinsic to intrinsic motivations for interreligious dialogue.

Unless we teach our children peace, someone else will teach them violence. Until the peace movement focuses on schools, where millions of children at all levels are attending every day, little progress can be expected toward creating a peaceable society.

⁵ Bernard Haring, *The Healing Power of Peace and Nonviolence* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), 7.

The purpose of peace education is to create a space in which people from diverse religious traditions can engage in honest conversation for learning together. Monthly symposiums will help participants to explore the climate of religious pluralism in the world today, and how diversity can strengthen non-violent social action as they work to achieve peace and positive community building throughout the world.

Students can focus on why there are many conflicts and violations of human rights among religions in Nigeria. Today's participants in the destruction of life in Nigeria are adherents of faiths that advocate peace for all, namely Christianity, Islam and African indigenous religions. Lack of peace in Nigeria causes untold suffering to God's creation comprising humanity and the environment. The situation also hinders human development and the attainment of prosperity. Oppressive structures such as patriarchy and legal structures that are not applied uniformly become obstacles to the attainment of peace. Such obstacles are found in all institutions in a society: family, politics, church, school, and the economy. Students can be asked, what can you do to stop violence in your school and create a more peaceful environment for everyone at your school? What changes have to happen in school? How can you implement some points of peace from your school into the church/ mosque? How many have had the experience of religious violence? What are the implications in our lives and in your community?

Violence prevention education, can be integrated in all faith congregations' programs, including pre-school programs, youth groups, marriage preparation, and Bible/ Qur'anic studies. Frequent worship services could encourage the equipped clergy to speak out on family abuse prevention, and challenge verbal or physical abuse.

Religious leaders should learn not to succumb to the temptation of allowing their religion to be abused and made an instrument by a political party. Religious leaders need to show sincere compassionate support for the victims of abuse. Our place of worship should be a “safe place” where victims of domestic violence can come for help. They also need to counter the violence of poverty in the community, by taking constructive and effective steps to prevent family violence in the community. Every year, the interfaith committee will organize an award ceremony to honor clergy, lay persons, youth who have contributed significantly to the interfaith work in the community.

Ninth Healthy Practice: Retreat

In addition, retreats that offer nonviolent strategies to end personal, interpersonal and systemic violence must be organized. This kind of retreat will explore ways in which the daily practice of nonviolence can become a part of people’s lives; how to work for peace, equality and community empowerment; renew hope and inspiration for the future; and gain confidence in their ability to make a difference in their lives and the lives of others.

The above challenging religious practices are facilitating tools to bring the community together for a peaceful and better living. In the next chapter, I will explore the views of my colleagues in the U.S.A. about the effectiveness of the curriculum outlines in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 8

FORUM OF DIALOGUE

This chapter reports the input of pastors in the United States of America. and analyzes their feedback for the implementation of the curriculum and religious practices in Nigeria.

After reading the designed outlines of the curriculum, five Nigerian pastors living in the United States of America participated in a forum of dialogue conducted through phone and emails. They are: Rev. Ajibola Fayeshile, an Anglican priest currently studying at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania; Rev. Simon Osunlana, a Methodist pastor currently in Florida; Rev. Nash Powl, a Church of Christ pastor in Nigeria currently studying in Claremont School of Theology; pastor Emmanuel Ilupeju, a Baptist pastor currently studying in Fuller Theological Seminary; and Rev. Father Moses Chikwe, a Catholic priest, currently studying at University of California-Los Angeles. In responding to the questionnaires sent these are the views of each of them.

Rev Ajibola Fayeshile: In examining the goals and objectives of the curriculum, I found it very relevant, useful and practical to the Nigerian context. One, Nigeria is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where ethnic and religious clashes are very rampant and have claimed more lives than any war in Nigerian history. Most importantly, the youths have always been the vehicle of destruction. Violence has been the second nature of Nigeria, to the extent that foreigners were being warned to avoid going to Nigeria. The curriculum mentioned key words such as love, peace, religious superiority, tolerance and dialogue in driving home its points. These are the important things which Nigerian youths should embrace if there was ever going to be peaceful co-existence and

co-habitation of the various ethnics and religions. These are the very things that have been advocated by organizations such as the United Nations and Amnesty International, not to mention world religious leaders. There is no area that should be removed in this plan. And as modification is concerned, I do not see any need for that either; meanwhile, areas such as violence, religious conflicts, tolerance and peace should be strengthened.

In accessing the practices of religions in terms of their values and applicability to the Nigerian context, I will start by saying that there are three major religions practiced in Nigeria: Christianity, Islam and traditional- even though the major problem and conflict has always been between Christianity and Islam. While Christianity preaches Peace, Islam believes in War (Jihad), while Christianity preaches forgiveness and conversion, Islam preaches retaliation and persecution. These two religions are at variance in their practices, which have been the problem all along. Islam believes in making disciples by the sword, and the fact that its adherents migrate to Christianity en-masse has not helped its feeling of inferiority either. Christianity on the other hand, due to its preaching on prosperity and divine blessings is feeling superior just because it is witnessing and enjoying a larger number of adherents. The two religions want to control the larger share of Nigeria, be it in the schools, political terrain, or social organizations. The Christians are the more tolerant, while the Muslims are the more aggressive and resilient. Their values are very distanced from each other and could be said to be opposite to each other, too. As far as their applicability to the Nigerian context is concerned; the two religions' values are embraced and applied by their different adherents and followers.

My interfaith experience and practices started from my childhood. I was born in a village where Christians, Muslims and traditionalists co-existed peacefully and happily.

In actual fact, for many years, I did not know the difference between one religion and the other or from one follower and the other. There was both a Church and Mosque in my village, and even a shrine! Since I had friends in the three religions, it was common for me to go to the mosque with my friends and sit with them during the hours of their prayers, even though I was at a loss as to what they were saying in Arabic, or to be seen in the house of my traditionalist friends to eat "*saraa*" (sacrificial food). On some Sundays and especially during Easter, Christmas and New Year's services, my Muslim and traditionalist friends would also be in the Church with me. Food and meats were always shared during religion festivals such as Muslim's *ed-el-fitri* and *ed-el-kabir*; Christian's Easter, Christmas and New Year celebrations and even traditionalists' *Oro, egungun* or *Ogun* festivals. As time went on though, after having heard repeatedly in Sunday services that eating sacrificial food and idol worshipping was a sin, I distanced myself from the eating of "*saraa*" (sacrificial food) with my traditionalist friends. This was easy for me because at that time a great Christian Revival hit our village and there was a great number of converts from traditionalists to Christianity-many of my traditionalist friends and very few of my Muslim friends were converted. So my association was narrowed down to two religions- Christianity and Islam. That was how it was until the age of 25 when I got admitted into the Seminary for my ordination program. It was easy for me to continue my friendship with my Muslim friends because there was no intimidation or violence. There was even a saying among the followers of both religions that "we are serving one and the same God, but in different languages." There were no religious fundamentalists and extremists as we have today. There were values of tolerance, love and peaceful co-existence.

Another reason why I continued to maintain my friendship with them was because I thought God might convert one or more of them into Christianity through our friendship. It did happen to one of my childhood Muslim friends who is now a Pastor to the glory of God. To date, few of my Muslim friends are still in touch with me, and I with them. I do not feel superior or intolerant to them. It has been very rewarding.

I love this project because it has something in common with a program I am going to do very soon. I am available for any contribution or anything that might be required of me to make this project work. It is a laudable, relevant and practical project.

Rev. Nash Powl: I have carefully gone through the questions presented in this questionnaire. They were well thought out and will in my opinion be practicable and applicable in the Nigerian context. My suggestions to any modification to the document will come as I present my response to the questionnaire in prose. Application as earlier mentioned is not in question. However, the method of application is very important. Having lived most of my life in Nigeria and experienced some of the bitter aspects of religious intolerance, I find this a commendable exercise. It's no doubt that no amount of effort toward reconciliation will be too much. My observation of religious intolerance in Nigeria is that it has always been perpetuated by religious leaders. This is unfortunate but true. Before this wave of intolerance came into the Nigerian situation, religious leaders were tolerant, respectful and accepting of religious adherents other than those of their own faith. The rise of extreme fundamentalism from all religious sectors was a sad development. Applying this well constructed curriculum in the Nigerian context I feel should begin with the leaders.

First is that they have a thorough familiarization with the document. Knowledge, however, is not enough to bring change, but conviction in the document is the next important step. Until they accept the content of the curriculum in good faith, and are willing to participate, it could be difficult to make reasonable strides.

The inclusion in the curriculum of the study of scripture from both faith groups I find impressive. Currently, faith groups have been very protective of their followers handling scripture from another faith group. Suspicion is so severe that the common lay followers in most faith groups are totally ignorant of the actual scriptural injunctions of their counterpart faith groups. Leaders have used the lack of awareness to their own advantage. Many have vilified the other scriptures, to the point that their followers have very negative impressions of other sacred writings other their own. Though study of scriptures from the opposite faith communities may have occurred, it is mainly done for academic purposes or to engage in religious debates with the "opposing" faith group. These of course are not healthy approaches to facing the critical issues of the moment, i.e., understanding and tolerance. It is very important that the myth and deep suspicion of scriptures from the opposite faith is dispelled to the barest minimum. I see this exercise put forward by this project as a step toward accomplishing this goal. Feeling comfortable with scriptures from another faith group, I believe is a step toward tolerance.

As a former director of a community interfaith group here in the United States, I learned a lot about tolerance and acceptance among faith communities. Understanding areas that are sensitive to another faith and being respectful in those instances is the first step to reposing faith and trust in the other faith groups. I still maintain that leaders of Nigerian faith groups with specific reference to the Christian and Muslim leaders

dialogue at local communal levels to put out in the open areas what could trigger sentiments. The leadership being referred to here is not leaders that have no direct contact with the lay-followers. Rather, I'm referring to the local community leaders that live within very close proximity and are in daily contact with the laity.

Simon Osunlana: This curriculum is particularly useful among the Christian youths in Nigeria. If Christian youths know how to love their neighbors who are non-Christians, there is a tendency for them to be able to set good examples for the youths in other religious faiths. However, since the study is focused on one religious group out of many religions that exist in Nigeria, the impact may be limited.

In Nigeria, just as it is in other cultures around the world, religion permeates every segment of life. Nigeria is a heterogeneous society religiously, culturally and politically. In recent years it has been terribly polarized by religious bigotry, and therefore unhealthy competitions, fighting, killings and destruction of lives and properties have almost become part of the daily life experiences of the Nigerian populace. The youths in particular have been used in most instances as the agents of destruction. Many youths consider it fashionable to join religious gangs, who are killing and destroying lives in the name of religion. A bible study that focuses on promoting peaceful co-existence among people of different creeds is very imperative in Nigeria. It is more urgently needed among youths than any other age group.

This project is therefore very relevant to the Nigerian situation because it not only promotes peaceful co-existence among people of different faiths in Nigeria, it also invariably encourages youth to respect the dignity of human life. If the information in this

project circulates widely among youths in Nigeria, there will be peace in the country and therefore the social-economic life in Nigeria will be enhanced.

Most families in the Western part of Nigeria have people of different faiths in the family. For instance, in my family though most of us are Christians, we have Muslims and African Traditional Religionists as members of the extended family. One is therefore left with only one option, i.e. accepting him/her as they are. Loving them, not because of their religious preference but because they are family members. This same attitude has helped me in my relationship with other people who are non- family members but have a different religion than my own. I look at them as being first and foremost human before they decided on what religion they subscribe to.

Rev. Father Moses Chikwe: The curriculum looks great and appears to be a good fit for the Nigerian context. I liked the way you organized the topics and the excerpts of what you are going to teach each month. It would also be good to specify the timeline of the chosen topics. According to the curriculum it appears the training will run in months. Would be one topic for each month or are you going to stretch the topic to cover the entire days and weeks in a month? It would also be nice to include the objectives that participants would be able to learn and practice justice, since there is no peace without justice. And you included justice as one of the topics. It wouldn't hurt to add the objectives that students should know and be able to communicate peace in the dialogue with other religions. They should learn the principles that undergird inter-religious dialogue.

Pastor Emmanuel Ilupeju: This curriculum is practical and useful in the Nigerian

context, if the Christian will build a new paradigm that entrenches Christ's love and peace in a nation that is filled with intolerance, suspicion, ethnic hatred, rancor and injustice. Justice and grace needed to be well defined so as not to be abused. Most religions of the world talk about peace, but find it difficult to apply the principles they talk about. The world kills to maintain peace, and that is why peace-keeping forces will be sent with guns to people's territory to maintain peace and order by killing, but the peace that lasts comes from above, through dialogue, prayer and the word of God. Therefore, the kind of peace that is applicable in Nigerian context is the kind that comes from above, which is generated from within the heart of man, and radiates to the community.

I believe it takes the Holy Spirit to have and sustain peace; therefore the interfaith experiences should be modeled after the syncretistic work of the Holy Spirit in different religious beliefs. The role of the Holy Spirit in peace making should be emphasized more.

My response to feedback: On Fayeshile's comment that "Christians are the more tolerant while the Muslims are the more aggressive and resilient," he is articulating the commonly held understanding that needs to be corrected. On Rev. Father Chikwe, questions to include justice as a topic, this has been done in the curriculum outlines. The curriculum outlines have been designed to have a topic per month which can also be divided in sub topics when necessary. Going through their feedbacks and inputs I am more assured that this project is feasible in Nigeria, because these are not only the various Christian denominations, they represent various geographic areas in Nigeria.

CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

There is no peace within a nation without peace among the religions. Religion is the foundational insight that divides the population: one half Muslim and the other half Christian. Despite the proliferation of mosques and churches in Nigeria and the intensification of mass religious activities, the series of religious crises witnessed in Nigeria in the last two decades, and the aggressive display of religious piety with the readiness with which we pounce on our neighbors and townsmen, maiming and killing, was not only unhelpful to Nigeria's socio-economic development but very injurious to Muslim- Christian relations. These crises significantly undermined the basis of our collective existence that took generations, and centuries to build and nurture; and resulted in massive loss in human life and material resources, which no society could ill-afford. And when a nation suffers sudden death through religion, it becomes obvious that each faith needs the defibrillator of peace that will cause a major transformation in the nature of religious conflict in Nigeria. The defibrillator will shape the growing religious activity and consciousness in Nigeria, toward peace and tolerance. It will engage each faith to address all social issues of injustice, poverty, illiteracy, and health care. It will revive the religious virtues of compassion, love, honor, and respect for the neighbor and indeed, the religious sanctity of life and property of a fellow human being. It will revamp our value system and the imperative of moral regeneration of the nation. Such a defibrillator will help build sturdy bridges of understanding between Islam and Christianity, and between Muslim and Christian communities in Nigeria. It will sustain the inter-religious dialogue, not regarding these dialogues as mere academic exercises. It will endeavor to carry the message of tolerance and mutual understanding, which these dialogues teach, to our

mosques and churches. Religious instruction in all institutions of learning in the country must take place so as to make adherents of both religions known each other and avoid mutual suspicions, adding that for what you do not know or understand, you fear." It will address many grievances which contribute to communal and religious conflict which are related to equity and fairness and, indeed, the inability or outright refusal of local officialdom to promote them. It will also fight against poverty, enabling Muslims and Christians to live decent and productive lives. Religion is for us to know God, and if we want to know God, we must know those created by God. If we cannot live together, why do we claim to be worshipping God?

In today's world people who live near each other isolate themselves based on religion; this divides people and maintains a sense of hatred and violence for other religions. For Christians, the desire to live in peace with other faiths should be based on Jesus's commandment in Lk. 6.27-28, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who treat you badly." The social and emotional effects of underdevelopment and illiteracy in Africa are much to deal with. And, when violence is added to it, the future and hope of the people involved are in doubt.

I have argued throughout the project that peace had only been preached by the so called "peacemaking religion." Thus there is a need to re-emphasize peace in our Sunday schools and church teaching. In order to address this crucial problem, and to assist pastors interested in this new vision, my proposed outline on peace education for pastors can move them from theorizing peace into practicing it. This curriculum outline can be adapted to various contexts and by other faiths. Working with young people can help

reduce the social inequality and tension at the root of most violence, and restore the human integrity that violence denies.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS

- I Examine the curriculum and assess the goals/ objectives and activities.
 - a) How relevant, useful or practical is this curriculum for Nigerian context?
 - b) What areas need to be strengthened, modified or removed?
- II Assess the religious practices in terms of their value and applicability to the Nigerian context.
- III a) What are your interfaith experiences/ practices?
 - b) How can your experience/ practices / models be used to make this project more meaningful?
 - c) What other suggestions or recommendation would you make?

PERMISSION

I, have agreed that my feedback on the Curriculum designed for the church in Nigeria be quoted in full in Rev Isaiah E. Dada D Min Project titled "Defibrillation of Peace: A Christian Clergy's Approach towards the Restoration of Peace in the Nigerian Interfaith Community."

SIGNATURE & DATE:

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